



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

45th plenary meeting

Thursday, 2 November 2006, at 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 156

Extension of the terms of the ad litem judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994

Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/509)

Letter from the President of the Security Council to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/548)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In document A/61/509, the Secretary-General transmitted a letter dated 23 August 2006 from Judge Erik Møse, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), that directly relates to the ability of the International Tribunal to implement its completion strategy.

In his letter, the Secretary-General reports that the President recalls that the terms of office of the 18 ad litem judges will come to an end on 24 June

2007. The Secretary-General also reports that the President has requested that the terms of office of all 18 ad litem judges be extended until 31 December 2008, which is the date when trials at the International Tribunal are, in accordance with its completion strategy, expected to be completed.

Members will recall that the General Assembly, by its decision 57/414 C of 25 June 2003 and in accordance with article 12 ter, paragraph 1 (d), of the statute of the International Tribunal, elected from a list of candidates approved by the Security Council 18 ad litem judges to a four-year term of office beginning on 25 June 2003.

Of those 18 ad litem judges, the Secretary-General has to date appointed a total of 10 to serve on trials at the International Tribunal, nine of whom are, in accordance with the statute of the Tribunal, currently serving on either multi-accused or single-accused trials.

The Secretary-General also reports that the President of the Tribunal estimates that the multi-accused trials, in which six ad litem judges are serving, will continue beyond 24 June 2007, and, in addition, that there are two single-accused trials that the President has indicated may be completed only after 24 June 2007.

The Secretary-General further reports that the President of the International Tribunal does not wish the appointment of ad litem judges to new trials that will continue beyond 24 June 2007 to be delayed until

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after the election of new ad litem judges. He therefore wishes to be able to request the appointment of ad litem judges to new trials as soon as possible.

The President indicates that this may include, depending on their expertise and availability, not only ad litem judges who have previously been appointed, but also ad litem judges who have not yet been appointed to serve at the International Tribunal. He has accordingly requested that the terms of the remaining eight ad litem judges also be extended until 31 December 2008.

As the statute of the International Tribunal does not provide for extending the term of office of the ad litem judges, the approval of the Security Council, as the parent organ of the International Tribunal, and of the General Assembly, as the organ that elects its judges, would be needed in order to extend the term of office of all the ad litem judges of the International Tribunal elected on 25 June 2003. The Secretary-General, therefore, requests that the General Assembly and the Security Council grant such approval.

Furthermore, in his letter the Secretary-General reports that the approval of the Security Council and the General Assembly is needed to allow Judges Bossa, Arrey, Lattanzi, Muthoga, Short, Hökborg, Hikmet, Kam and Park to serve in the International Tribunal beyond the cumulative period of service provided for under article 12 ter, paragraph 2, of the statute of the International Tribunal and until 31 December 2008.

Article 12 ter, paragraph 2, provides that:

"During their term, ad litem judges will be appointed by the Secretary-General, upon request of the President of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, to serve in the Trial Chambers for one or more trials, for a cumulative period of up to, but not including, three years".

The Secretary-General therefore requests that the General Assembly and the Security Council grant such approval.

The Secretary-General reports that, as far as the financial consequences of the President's proposal are concerned, ad litem judges will have their terms extended only until the date when the completion of trials is foreseen. The Security Council and the General Assembly would then, in 2008, be able to review the status of the International Tribunal's ad litem judges.

The Secretary-General also reports that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/289, should the cumulative period of service of ad litem judges amount to three years or more, this will not result in any change in their entitlements and benefits and, in particular, will not give rise to any additional entitlements or benefits other than those that already exist, which will, in such an eventuality, be extended pro rata by virtue of the extension of their service.

In document A/61/548, the President of the Security Council transmits to the President of the General Assembly the text of Council resolution 1717 (2006), of 13 October 2006, whereby the Council, inter alia:

"1. Decides in response to the request by the Secretary-General and notwithstanding the provisions of Article 12 ter of the Statute of the International Tribunal for Rwanda, to extend until 31 December 2008 the term of office of the following ad litem judges of the International Tribunal who were elected on 25 June 2003: Mr. Aydin Sefa Akay (Turkey); Ms. Florence Rita Arrey (Cameroon); Ms. Solomy Balungi Bossa (Uganda); Mr. Robert Fremr (Czech Republic); Ms. Taghrid Hikmet (Jordan); Ms. Karin Hökborg (Sweden); Mr. Vagn Joensen (Denmark); Mr. Gberdao Gustave Kam (Burkina Faso); Ms. Flavia Lattanzi (Italy); Mr. Kenneth Machin (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); Mr. Joseph Edward Chiondo Masanche (United Republic of Tanzania); Mr. Tan Sri Dato'Hj. Mohd. Azmi Dato' Hj. Kamaruddin (Malaysia); Mr. Lee Gacuiga Muthoga (Kenya); Mr. Seon Ki Park (Republic of Korea); Mr. Mparany Mamy Richard Rajohnson (Madagascar); Mr. Emile Francis Short (Ghana); Mr. Albertus Henricus Johannes Swart (Netherlands); Ms. Aura E. Guerra de Villalaz (Panama).

"2. Decides in response to the request by the Secretary-General to allow ad litem Judges Bossa, Arrey, Lattanzi, Muthoga, Short, Hökborg, Hikmet, Kam and Park to serve in the International Tribunal for Rwanda beyond the cumulative period of service provided for under Article 12 ter of the Statute and until 31 December 2008;

"3. Requests States to continue to make every effort to ensure that their nationals who were elected as ad litem judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda remain available to serve until 31 December 2008".

If there is no objection, I propose that the Assembly endorse this recommendation of the Secretary-General that was endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1717 (2006), and that the recommendation take effect as of 26 October 2006.

It was so decided.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 156?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 103

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council

Letter from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/89)

Letter from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the President of the General Assembly (A/61/296)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will first proceed to a by-election to elect two members of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with rule 140 of the rules of procedure. In this connection, I would first like to draw the attention of members to document A/61/89, containing a letter dated 7 June 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations, in which he announces that Spain would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the remainder of its term in favour of Portugal¹

I would also like to draw the attention of members to document A/61/296, containing a letter dated 21 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, in which he announces that Turkey would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the term 2006-2008 in favour of Greece, as of 31 December 2006.

As a result, two vacancies will occur and two new members must therefore be elected to fill the unexpired terms of office of Spain and Turkey, commencing on 1 January 2007 and expiring 31 December 2008. In accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2847 (XXVI), of 20 December 1971, and taking into account that the vacancies will occur from among the Western European and other States, the two new members should therefore be elected from that region.

I should like to inform the Assembly that the candidate that receives a two-thirds majority of members present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes. May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to the procedure?

It was so decided.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations.

In accordance with rule 92, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

I should like to inform members that as of 1 January 2007, the following States from the Group of Western European and other States will be represented on the Economic and Social Council: Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Therefore the names of these seven States should not appear on the ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the vote. I hope that delegates will cooperate during the elections and remind them that there should be no lobbying during the ballots. That means that once the voting has started, no campaign or other material should be distributed. I call on all delegates to stay in their seats so that we can hold the election in an orderly manner. I thank the delegates for their cooperation.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that are being distributed and to write on them the names of the two States for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more than two names from the region will be declared invalid. If a ballot paper contains the names of Member States which do not belong to the region, those names will not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia), Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar), Ms. Till (New Zealand) and Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the representative of Mali, who wishes to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Diarra (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I am sorry to interrupt the voting process, but my delegation is not clear on what is at stake in these elections. It was our understanding that there were four candidates from among the Group of Western European and other States, and that Portugal and Greece were also added to the list. My delegation would like some clarifications before voting.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): As I said earlier, the General Assembly is now proceeding to a by-election to elect two members of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with rule 140 of the rules of procedure.

I drew the attention of members to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations announcing that Spain would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the remaining term, in favour of Portugal, and to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations announcing that Turkey would like to relinquish its seat on the Council for the term 2006-2008, in favour of Greece.

Following that, the General Assembly will proceed to the regular election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan),

Ms. Aperans (Latvia), Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar), Ms. Till (New Zealand) and Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Group E — Western European and other States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	189
Number of invalid ballots:	5
Number of valid ballots:	184
Abstentions:	5
Required two-thirds majority:	120
Number of votes obtained:	
Portugal	133
Greece	129
Canada	28
Luxembourg	25
Netherlands	15
United States	15

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, Greece and Portugal have thus been elected members of the Economic and Social Council for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2007 and ending on 31 December 2008.

I congratulate Greece and Portugal, which have been elected members of the Economic and Social Council.

The General Assembly will next turn to the election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2006.

The 18 outgoing members are: Armenia, Bangladesh, Belize, Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Indonesia, Italy, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Panama, Poland, the Republic of Korea, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United States of America.

Pursuant to rule 146 of the rules of procedure, those countries are eligible for immediate re-election.

Members will recall that Greece and Portugal have just been elected to fill the two seats relinquished by Spain and Turkey, effective 1 January 2007.

Consequently, as of 1 January 2007, the following States will be represented on the Economic and Social Council: Albania, Angola, Australia, Austria, Benin, Brazil, Chad, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Czech Republic, Denmark, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Iceland, India, Japan, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The names of those 36 States should therefore not appear on the ballots.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2847 (XXVI), of 20 December 1971, and taking into account the number of States that will remain members of the Council after 1 January 2007, the 18 members should be elected as follows: five from African States, four from Asian States, two from Eastern European States, three from Latin American and Caribbean States and four from Western European and other States. The ballot papers reflect that pattern.

I should like to inform the Assembly that those candidates, their number not exceeding the number of seats to be filled, that receive the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of members present and voting will be declared elected.

In the case of a tie vote for a remaining seat, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding candidatures of the respective regional groups, the Secretariat has been informed that for the five vacant seats from among the African States, the Group has endorsed five candidates: Algeria, Cape Verde, Malawi, Somalia and the Sudan. For the four vacant seats from among the Asian States, the Group

has endorsed four candidates: Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan and the Philippines. For the two vacant seats from among the Eastern European States, there are three candidates: Belarus, Bulgaria and Romania.

For the three vacant seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there are four candidates: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia and El Salvador.

For the four vacant seats from among the Western European and other States, the Group has endorsed four candidates: Canada, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and the United States of America.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the names of the States for which they wish to vote. A ballot paper containing more names from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it will be declared invalid. If a ballot paper contains names of Member States that do not belong to that region, those names will not be counted at all.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia), Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar), Ms. Till (New Zealand) and Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 12.50 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African States

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	2
Required two-thirds majority:	127
Number of votes obtained:	
Cape Verde	187
Algeria	184
Malawi	184
Somalia	180
Sudan	170

Group B — Asian States

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	3
Required two-thirds majority:	126
Number of votes obtained:	
Philippines	188
Kazakhstan	187
Indonesia	184
Iraq	181
Myanmar	1

Group C — Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	1
Required two-thirds majority:	128
Number of votes obtained:	
Romania	139
Bulgaria	123
Belarus	112

Group D — Latin American and Caribbean States

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	0
Required two-thirds majority:	128
Number of votes obtained:	
Barbados	160
Bolivia	138
El Salvador	133
Argentina	120

Group E — Western European and other States

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	6
Required two-thirds majority:	124
Number of votes obtained:	
Luxembourg	185
Netherlands	176
Canada	175
United States	168
Spain	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes, Algeria, Barbados, Bolivia, Canada, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Malawi, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Romania, Somalia, the Sudan and the United States of America were elected members of the Economic and Social Council for a three-year term beginning 1 January 2007.

The Acting President: There still remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States.

We shall therefore proceed to the first restricted ballot.

This second round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected but that obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, namely, Belarus and Bulgaria. That is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed.

May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of the State for which they wish to

vote. Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of a State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, or if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia), Mrs. Rahantabololo (Madagascar), Ms. Till (New Zealand) and Mr. Oosthuizen (South Africa) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m. and resumed at 1.20 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C — Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	184
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	183
Abstentions:	2
Required two-thirds majority:	120
Number of votes obtained:	
Belarus	90
Bulgaria	89

This restricted ballot has once again been inconclusive. There still remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States.

In accordance with the rules of procedure, we should continue with the series of restricted ballots. However, in view of the lateness of the hour, I propose that we postpone further balloting until 3 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

46th plenary meeting

Thursday, 2 November 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 103 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now continue with the election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2006.

As members will recall, when the 45th plenary meeting was adjourned this morning, there remained one seat from among the Eastern European States to be filled. In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the next round of balloting by secret ballot. The third round of balloting will, in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure, also be the second restricted ballot.

This third round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected but obtained the largest number of votes in the previous ballot, namely, Belarus and Bulgaria. That is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, as well as if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Diaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 3.25 p.m. and resumed at 3.40 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

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Group C – Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	184
Abstentions:	3
Required two-thirds majority:	121
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	93
Bulgaria	88

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We shall therefore proceed to the third restricted ballot.

This fourth round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected in the previous ballot, namely, Belarus and Bulgaria. That is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of the State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, as well as if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.10 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C – Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	186
Abstentions:	3
Required two-thirds majority:	122
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	99
Bulgaria	84

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We must therefore proceed to the first unrestricted ballot.

This fifth round of balloting is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure. May I remind the Assembly that any Member State from among the Eastern European States may be a candidate, except those that will remain members of the Economic and Social Council as of 1 January 2007, as well as those that were already elected for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2007, namely, Albania, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I request representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C" will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State, as well as if they contain the name of a Member State that does not belong to the region.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 4.20 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C – Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	187
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	187
Abstentions:	2
Required two-thirds majority:	124
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	107
Bulgaria	77
Serbia	1

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We must therefore proceed to a second unrestricted ballot.

This sixth round of balloting is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure. May I remind the Assembly that any Member State from among the Eastern European States may be a candidate, except those that will remain members of the Economic and Social Council as of 1 January 2007, as well as those that were already elected for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2007, namely, Albania, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I request representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C" will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State, as well as if they contain the name of a Member State that does not belong to the region.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 4.50 p.m. and resumed at 5.10 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C – Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	186
Abstentions:	2
Required two-thirds majority:	123
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	115
Bulgaria	67
Estonia	1
Latvia	1

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We must therefore proceed to a third unrestricted ballot.

This seventh round of balloting is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure. May I remind the Assembly that any Member State from among the Eastern European States may be a candidate, except those that will remain members of the Economic and Social Council as of 1 January 2007, as well as those that were already elected for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2007, namely, Albania, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Romania and the Russian Federation.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I request representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C" will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State, as well as if they contain the name of a Member State that does not belong to the region.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 5.25 p.m. and resumed at 5.40 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Group C – Eastern European States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	185
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	185
Abstentions:	1
Required two-thirds majority:	123
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	120
Bulgaria	64

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We must therefore proceed to the eighth round of balloting, which is the fourth restricted ballot.

This eighth round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected in the previous ballot, namely, Belarus and Bulgaria. That is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of the State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C", for the Eastern European States, will be declared invalid if they contain the name of State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, as well as if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the Acting President, Ms. Batista Díaz (Dominican Republic), Ms. Barthélémy (France), Ms. Kasymova (Kyrgyzstan), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Till (New Zealand) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 5.50 p.m. and resumed at 6.25 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Group C – Eastern European States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	186
Abstentions:	1
Required two-thirds majority:	124
Votes obtained:	
Belarus	123
Bulgaria	62

This restricted ballot has again been inconclusive. There remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States.

In accordance with the rules of procedure, we should continue with a series of restricted ballots. However, in view of the lateness of the hour, unless I hear any objection, I propose that we postpone further balloting until the morning of Tuesday, 7 November 2006.

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President: In connection with the meeting of the General Assembly to be held on Tuesday, 7 November, I wish to inform members that we shall first continue with the election of the members of the Security Council. Thereafter, we shall continue with the election of the members of the Economic and Social Council. In connection with the Economic and Social Council election, I would also like to announce to members that I have been informed by the delegation of Australia that it wishes to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for the remainder of its term, in favour of New Zealand. Consequently, the Assembly will conduct another by-election to fill that seat.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

Official Records

47th plenary meeting

Friday, 3 November 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Statement by the Acting President

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): Today we are considering several items, including agenda item 42, "Report of the Economic and Social Council"; item 43, Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin"; item 44, "Culture of peace"; item 45, "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order"; and item 49, "Sport for peace and development".

In September 2005, world leaders reaffirmed, in the World Summit Outcome document (resolution 60/1), the Declaration on a Culture of Peace. This year is the sixth year of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. We should indeed highlight its objectives and the true meaning of the culture of peace. It is a set of principles and conduct for a way of living designed to renounce violence and prevent the eruption of conflicts. It also focuses on the underlying causes of such conflicts. It attempts to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations between individuals, States and groups.

The agenda for a culture of peace, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999 (resolution 52/243), set out eight strengthening actions relating to the culture of peace: actions to foster a culture of peace through

education; to promote sustainable economic and social development; to promote respect for all human rights; to ensure equality between women and men; to foster democratic participation; to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity; to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge; and to promote international peace and security.

It was the task of UNESCO — working together with a number of entities within the United Nations system, Member States and civil society — to coordinate all of the relevant activities relating to the International Decade for a Culture of Peace. Document A/61/175, which is before the Assembly today, provides a comprehensive picture of all of the important and effective activities envisaged, showing that the United Nations is playing a major and significant role in establishing a new global human order.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of initiatives taken to promote dialogue among civilizations, cultures, religions and peoples. This is a way of strengthening rapprochement, tolerance and mutual understanding of values, languages, history and culture. A number of summit conferences have focused on practical and concrete activities to foster such dialogue.

The leaders of the world, in the World Summit Outcome document, also stressed the importance of sports in all forms in strengthening a culture of peace and development. Sports can also help to promote

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tolerance and mutual understanding. The year 2005 was declared the International Year for Sport and Physical Education, and we stressed the important part played by sports in helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to improve public health. Emphasis was placed on the concept of sports as a world language that could break down barriers, including social, religious and ethnic barriers between peoples and societies and could bring people together, surpassing differences and strengthening communication and understanding. All of this would help to promote lasting peace among peoples.

Today, the world is still faced with conflict, war, violence and diseases. We all have to work together to put an end to these phenomena that hamper sustainable development and peace. The United Nations and the General Assembly play an extremely important role by developing policies and mechanisms to deal with these scourges. I myself believe that sports and propagating a culture of peace are two important elements that will help us to build a world full of tolerance, solidarity, mutual understanding and peace.

Agenda item 42

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/61/3)

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/273)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*). I would like to recall that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 58/316, of 1 July 2004, the Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 13 September 2006, to consider agenda item 42 in its entirety in plenary meeting, on the understanding that the administrative, programme and budgetary aspects should be dealt with by the Fifth Committee.

At the same meeting, the Assembly took note of the clarification that, in implementing resolution 58/316 to consider item 42 in its entirety in plenary meeting, the relevant parts of chapter I of the report that are under agenda items already allocated to the Main Committees will be considered by the Committee concerned for final action by the General Assembly.

Under this item, the Assembly has before it the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/61/3), a report of the Secretary-General (A/61/370), and the

report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (A/61/273).

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ali Hachani, President of the Economic and Social Council, to introduce the report of the Council.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia). President of the Economic and Social Council: I thank you for this opportunity to introduce the 2006 report of the Economic and Social Council.

Development — together with peace and security, human rights and strengthening the United Nations — was a central concern of world Leaders at the 2005 World Summit. They placed the Economic and Social Council at the centre of efforts to monitor and advance implementation of the United Nations Development Agenda, in a unified and coherent way. Thus the common thrust of the Council's session this year was the follow-up to the commitments made at the Summit.

I will briefly highlight some of the key outcomes of the Council's work during the past year and then focus on the future, including the new responsibilities assigned to the Economic and Social Council by the Summit.

This year's special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development helped maintain the momentum of the Summit for accelerating progress towards the agreed development goals. Advancing the realization of the Monterrey Consensus was seen as a critical element to that end. This meeting represents the centrepiece of our dialogue on the global partnership for development. As I proposed at the conclusion of the meeting, I intend to start exploring how to enhance the impact of the dialogue and to initiate consultations with all stakeholders in this regard.

The Economic and Social Council's high-level segment put productive employment and decent work squarely at the forefront of the development agenda. In particular, the ministerial declaration pertaining to employment generation and decent work for all adopted at the end of the segment identifies a number of concrete steps to make the goal of full and productive employment and decent work a central objective of national and international policies.

The need to fulfil this pledge, to which leaders committed at the Summit, cannot be overemphasized.

Widening gaps between skilled and unskilled workers, and between the formal and informal economies, have contributed to persistent and deepening inequalities worldwide. The General Assembly may wish to build on the work of the Economic and Social Council on this central issue.

The Council's coordination segment dealt with another aspect of the on-going efforts to push the development agenda forward: how to translate economic growth into effective social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger. The debate showed that we do not have definite answers. The Council, therefore, asked the United Nations system to continue to study this question. An important feature of the coordination segment was the follow-up event on avian flu, which took place in the presence of a number of high-level representatives from Governments and relevant international and non-governmental organizations. Discussions during this panel demonstrated the importance of the Economic and Social Council's coordinating role and its ability to shape responses to emerging challenges of this nature.

The Council's work on the operational activities for development was of special significance this year. For the first time, the Economic and Social Council launched the triennial review of funding for development cooperation. The debate on the subject highlighted the diverging trends between core and non-core resource flows, the increasing complexity of funding mechanisms and the associated challenges to the financial sustainability of United Nations system's development cooperation efforts. The Council evaluated how far the United Nations development system has gone in implementing the Assembly's guidance during the last Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review. Expectations are high for the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, given the unprecedented focus on the United Nations role in development cooperation and on the need for greater coherence and impact in its work.

During the humanitarian affairs segment, the Council gave guidance on how to reinforce the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system and of others. It gave strong support for the humanitarian reform agenda and made several proposals for dividing the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly on humanitarian policy issues.

The Economic and Social Council is vested with the authority to promote an integrated approach to peace and development. The call to address the root causes of the world's threats and challenges involves unlocking and strengthening the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. Ultimately, development and security can come only from integrated policies that promote poverty eradication, sustainable development and human rights of our societies. The Assembly may want to draw upon the work of the Council in this area, especially for its deliberations on the prevention of armed conflict.

In the general segment, the Council focused on consolidating and coordinating the work of its subsidiary bodies. The Council's role in that sphere is becoming all the more important as we proceed to implement the development agenda. To that end, the Economic and Social Council had invited the functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to examine their methods of work, and this year several commissions have given renewed attention to their working methods.

Moreover, the agreement to extend the Economic and Social Council's ad hoc advisory groups on Guinea-Bissau and Haiti is a clear recognition of the useful contribution the Council can make by promoting an integrated approach in that area. We now need to ensure that the lessons learned during the Council's experience benefit the future work of the Peacebuilding Commission through continuous engagement between the relevant bodies.

It is also noteworthy that the Council adopted a resolution on promoting youth employment, in which it urges Governments to consider youth employment as integral to their overall strategies for development and collective security, and encouraged mainstreaming youth employment in poverty reduction strategies.

The Council achieved another major breakthrough in crystallizing its own role and the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development in the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society. Agreement on a clear and well-defined intergovernmental process, including the additional new tasks for the Commission, together with broad multi-stakeholder engagement in the recently launched Global Alliance for Information and Communications Technologies and Development, carry the potential to make a strong and far-reaching

contribution to strengthening the United Nations role in this area and putting information and communications technologies in the service of the United Nations development agenda.

The 2005 World Summit placed important responsibilities on the Economic and Social Council for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. Responding to this call will be an important tenet of the Council's work in the coming years. So, let me share with the Assembly what I personally see as the opportunities that the new functions of the Council offer, especially for the General Assembly. Obviously, the resolution Member States are finalizing will give, I hope, more detailed guidance on how the new mandates of the Economic and Social Council are to be made operational.

First, the annual ministerial-level substantive review provides a new mechanism for the review of progress and for promoting implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits, including internationally agreed development goals. In my view, the annual review, owing to its ministerial participation, can identify implementation deficiencies at the global, regional and national levels, as well as their linkages, and help the international community track policies in support of the agreed development goals and to make necessary adjustments. I hope the General Assembly will draw upon the work of the Council in the annual meeting on development that, pursuant to its resolution 60/265, the Assembly must hold during the debate on the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

Secondly, the high-level biennial Development Cooperation Forum provides a unique opportunity for Member States to keep global development aid cooperation issues high on the international community's agenda. The Forum should have a real impact in promoting international development cooperation and gearing development cooperation to support the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. The Forum brings together all development cooperation partners for a dialogue on key policy issues. Thus it will scale-up actions to perfect the link between normative and operational work of the United Nations, and help translate what we have learned into improved policies, strategy and practice at all levels.

Within the implementation architecture for the development agenda, on the normative side, we have a three-tier structure: the General Assembly; the Economic and Social Council; and the functional commissions, as well as a number of funds and programmes. The World Summit has challenged these bodies to organize their work in order to maximize their individual contributions for the effective realization of the goals set out in the development agenda.

Do the current agendas of both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council respond adequately to the priorities set out in the United Nations development agenda? If not, could these bodies' respective work be streamlined to allow the Assembly's Second and Third Committees and the Economic and Social Council to have a substantive discussion on key issues and achieve an integrated overview of them? While the recurrence of certain topics in various intergovernmental forums illustrates their importance and urgency, Member States might, for instance, better utilize the Economic and Social Council for initiating work on certain topics and make the most of the Council's new monitoring and review function in the implementation of certain United Nations legislation. Each body should have maximum value added and approach issues from a unique angle.

In this regard, we are all anticipating, of course, the report of the High-level Panel, which will lead, I hope, to further discussion of ways for increasing coherence in the work of the United Nations in these areas. We have already taken important strides towards a strong and more broadly capable Economic and Social Council. On the basis of the General Assembly's deliberations on the Panel's recommendations, we must also make the United Nations a better tool for development activities on the ground.

Many other outcomes of the Council are of key relevance to the work of the General Assembly, such as on human rights, social development and gender mainstreaming, to mention only a few. Outcomes in these areas, among others, will help the Second and Third Committees in their work.

My experience as President of the Council has shown me the potential of the Economic and Social Council in meeting many of the critical concerns of the international community. The profile, the convening power and the consensus building opportunity that

have been the trademark of the United Nations conferences in the last decade and-a-half can be incorporated into the Council. Indeed, the inclusive spirit of United Nations international conferences permeated this year's session of the Council. In particular, the high-level segment showed that the Economic and Social Council can effectively address cross-cutting issues in a comprehensive manner, with the participation of a significant number of ministers and high-level officials carrying diverse portfolios, as well as with the involvement of development partners and organizational decision-makers. The consultative status that the Economic and Social Council offers to the non-governmental organization community in allowing it to contribute to its work is another unique feature of this Charter organ. It is a feature that should, I believe, be strengthened.

Finally, in order to make the Economic and Social Council's old and new functions fully operational, it is important to support them with sufficient funding and to give the Bureau of the Economic and Social Council the means to carry out its duties.

The adoption of the resolution on the follow-up to the development outcome of the Summit was important. Hopefully, the ongoing consultations will be completed soon and lead to the adoption of a resolution on strengthening the Economic and Social Council. These two resolutions will serve as guide-posts in our efforts to accelerate implementation.

I would like to close with the observation that a more substantive and interactive relationship is developing between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. This relationship should help in providing meaningful and practical orientation to the international community in the implementation of the United Nations development agenda. In this process, key new functions given to the Economic and Social Council must play a central role, enabling the Council to serve as the bridge between policymaking and implementation in the area of economic and social development.

Mr. Rosengren (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential

candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union welcomes the opportunity to discuss the report of the Economic and Social Council and the work of the Council during this past year. We would like to express our appreciation to the Bureau of the Council for its leading role in contributing to a successful, substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. We would also like to extend our compliments to the Secretariat.

The 2006 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva was productive, and outcomes from the high-level coordination, humanitarian and operational activities segments were all finalized. We would like to thank all member States for their constructive approach that resulted in a timely conclusion of our negotiations.

The theme of this year's high-level segment of the Council was "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development". It was a major step forward to bring the decent work agenda to a wider United Nations context. The European Union sees the vital importance in including the social dimension of globalization and the fundamental principles and rights to work, employment, social protection and social dialogue in the ministerial declaration.

In the operational activities segment, discussions on the role of operational activities in achieving the Millennium Development Goals provided valuable insights for further elaboration. The EU regards the debate and deliberations on the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 59/250, on the triennial comprehensive policy review, as a very good and sound basis for the preparations for the next review, in 2007. The EU remains committed to being a constructive partner during that preparation process.

Strengthening the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance at all levels was the crucial theme of the humanitarian affairs segment. In that regard, the EU looks forward to further strengthening the United Nations humanitarian system and sees the cluster leadership approach, inter alia, as a useful way to strengthen humanitarian coordination. The

traditional transition event, organized in Geneva, also provided valuable input for our joint work on the transition from relief to development. In addition, the panel discussions on gender-based violence and chronically underfunded emergencies provided a good basis for further discussions on both of those important topics.

In the general segment of the substantive session, more than 40 resolutions were adopted. However, work remains to be done. In that regard, the EU is looking forward to a constructive resumed session of the Economic and Social Council and hopes that all outstanding issues can be resolved in a timely manner.

With regard to the 2006 Special High-level Meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the EU acknowledges the continued work aimed at coherence, coordination and cooperation in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1).

The EU attaches great importance to strengthening and revitalizing the Economic and Social Council along the lines set out in the World Summit Outcome Document. We hope that the negotiations on the draft resolution on reform of the Economic and Social Council will gain new momentum so that the Council can continue its work with reform functions at its next substantive session. We encourage the co-Chairs to continue to provide leadership for our work in fully implementing the mandate given by the Summit.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): I would like to begin by thanking my dear friend and colleague Ambassador Ali Hachani, President of the Council, for introducing the 2006 report of the Council (A/61/3), which provides a very good overview of its work.

I would first like to highlight a few issues that emerged from this year's substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. The theme for this year's high-level segment was well chosen. Decent work for all is a key tool for harnessing the energy of individuals in the fight against poverty and threats to our security. A decent job constitutes a stake in society and therefore a contribution to stability; sustainability follows. We are therefore of the view that an employment strategy should be a fundamental

component of any development strategy. In the outcome of the segment, the ministers and heads of delegations highlighted the importance of harnessing that societal energy. They recognized the important role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to that end as well as the importance of ratification and implementation of the ILO conventions.

In that context, I would like to draw the special attention of members to the importance of promoting gender equality. By empowering women and ensuring equal opportunity, countries can achieve great gains in both economic and social terms. However, there is a long way to go. Women are still much more likely than men to be poor, malnourished and illiterate. They usually have less access than men to employment, and they are far less likely than men to be politically active. Women's empowerment should be at the centre of any employment strategy. Ensuring gender equality is vital to sustainable development and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.

During the operational activities segment, the Economic and Social Council launched the triennial review of funding for development cooperation. The substantive resolution adopted by the Council on operational activities shows its determination to perform its role by providing detailed guidance to the United Nations development system in order to improve its functions at the country level, as well as guidance to the Secretariat in order to strengthen its assessment and analytical work.

Let me now turn briefly to the coordination segment, which dealt with another central issue in the ongoing efforts to implement the development agenda: how to translate economic growth into effective social development, including the eradication of poverty and hunger. During the deliberations, it became clear that we do not have definite answers in that regard. The Council asked the United Nations system to continue to study that question.

Of all the issues covered by the general segment, I would like to highlight only the decisions dealing with the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on countries emerging from conflict, with respect to which we have once again established the primary importance of the Economic and Social Council in the area of long-term sustainable development in post-conflict situations. The continuation of the Groups on Haiti and Guinea-Bissau is an indication of that importance.

We can be fairly satisfied with the overall outcome of this year's substantive session.

I would now like to turn briefly to the future role of the Economic and Social Council, which is facing new challenges in the light of its new functions mandated by the Summit. It is now more important than ever that we avoid the overlapping and duplication of work. The new annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council and the annual meeting of the General Assembly mandated by paragraph 56 of the development follow-up resolution (60/265) should, for example, build on each other's outcomes rather than duplicating what the other is doing. The Economic and Social Council should closely follow the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and prepare a long-term foundation for the economies concerned rather than waste its energy on duplicating the Commission's efforts.

Another new challenge for the Economic and Social Council will be the outcome of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on system-wide coherence. Coordination remains central to the Council's functions, and I am sure that the outcome of the Panel will strengthen the work of the Council in that area.

As I have had the honour to serve as Vice-President of the Council this year, the Economic and Social Council has become closer to my heart. I would therefore like to express my deep concern at the lack of progress in the negotiations on strengthening the Economic and Social Council. If we are to have a meaningful Council session next year, we all have to show flexibility and arrive at compromises very soon.

Mr. Chulkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, on behalf of the Russian delegation, I would like to extend our thanks to the President of the Economic and Social Council, Mr. Hachani, for the detailed information he gave us on the very useful and important work done by the Council at its last session under his extremely able guidance.

The Russian Federation offers a positive assessment of the work done by the Economic and Social Council this year. In concluding the annual session, its member States expressed full support for the Council as the principal coordinating body of the United Nations in the social and economic areas. They also confirmed the principles of a comprehensive and coordinated implementation of decisions taken by

major conferences and summits, and recognized the need to improve the interaction between the Council and the functional commissions, in addition to ensuring greater interaction among the functional and regional commissions.

We regard as fully successful the outcome of the substantive session of the Council, focusing organizations in the United Nations system on constructive work to actually implement the decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit in respect of a major reform of the United Nations system. It was important that the Economic and Social Council's crucial role was proclaimed decisive in ensuring political and policy guidance for all activities in this area. A very solid package of decisions was taken by the Council in determining the basic parameters for international cooperation in support of sustainable growth and development of all countries in the world today, as well as for the promotion of the maximum development of the potential of the social and economic sector in the United Nations system.

We stress the importance of the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council, which even more clearly sets forth the guidelines for future activities in the United Nations system in the area of strengthening the foundations for sustainable development at the national and international levels. We believe that that document, and indeed the entire course of the very interesting and substantive discussion at the high-level segment, actually do correctly reflect the level of consensus reached on matters relating to employment and the rights of workers as it exists today among the various countries. We also welcome the outcome of work of the segment on operational activities.

It was fundamentally important that the Economic and Social Council confirmed the current three-tiered structure for operational activities with a clear division of labour between the General Assembly, which sets forth a political guideline, and the Economic and Social Council, which turns those policy guidelines into actual decisions for the operational agencies to implement. We believe that the main conclusions of the operational segment were the decisions on the priorities for the sixty-second session of the General Assembly in respect of the triennial review of the operational activities of the United Nations for development, confirming the decisive role

played by Assembly resolutions on all matters relating to operational activities.

Russia is an active member of two regional economic commissions — the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). We are pleased that the Economic and Social Council confirmed the key role played by regional commissions in developing a balanced global policy on trade, economic and financial issues, and also in coordinating and assessing implementation of decisions at major conferences and summits at the regional level.

We were pleased that a positive assessment was offered of the reform of the ECE. We believe that the forum made it possible to further improve the management structure of the Commission, to strengthen its accountability and transparency and to restructure its programme of work, so that it is now based on the priorities of ECE member States and takes account of the new political and economic realities in Europe.

We greatly appreciate the work done by ESCAP, *inter alia*, in developing a transport network and in dealing with issues relating to energy security and information technology. This work is proceeding along the lines of Russian proposals to establish a new transport, energy and information communications infrastructure in Asia and the Pacific.

The Russian Federation advocates the further strengthening of cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the international financial and trade institutions. The meeting at the high-level segment with the heads of those institutions confirmed the growing authority of the Economic and Social Council as a forum for global dialogue and interaction among partners with all interested players, so as to discuss emerging global tendencies and policies and to react effectively to events that take place in the international arena in the economic, environmental and social areas.

The practice of holding an annual high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development is also valuable and we believe this practice should be continued, taking into account the powers, mandates and decision-making modalities of the institutions involved. We believe that the next

such meeting will be a major milestone in preparing for a regular high-level dialogue on financing for development, both here in the General Assembly and, subsequently, at the upcoming international conference on reviewing the implementation of decisions taken at Monterrey.

In conclusion, I would like to make the following point: the 2005 World Summit gave a clear mandate regarding measures to be taken to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. We think that the draft resolution, as it stands now, is a very appropriate response to the instruction given us by the leaders of the Member States of the United Nations. We believe that work on it should be completed as soon as possible, particularly because the delegations during consultations have already been able to move significantly forward towards a common understanding of the fundamentally important elements therein. We hope that a consensus version of the draft will be available shortly, establishing sensible and pragmatic parameters for the work of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. Rachkov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus studied with interest the report on the work of the Economic and Social Council. We would like to extend our thanks to Ambassador Ali Hachani for introducing it to us.

This year was very special because it began the period of implementing agreements on supporting developments throughout the world and following up on decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit at the United Nations. If we really want to speed up the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, then it is clear that we must strengthen the coordinating mechanisms of the United Nations. In particular, we must strengthen the capacity of the Economic and Social Council. It is for that reason that, in the past year, we have attached such importance to making progress in the negotiations to reform the Council.

We continue to believe that the purpose of reform must be to assist the Council in playing its primary role of making development a success instead of a problem. To that end, we must direct the full potential of United Nations agencies and bodies in the economic and social area towards providing practical support to Governments most in need of assistance in achieving their national development strategies. The Economic and Social Council must become an international

forum for important international decisions in support of development. That should be the goal of the negotiations under way on reforming the Council.

Belarus hopes to become a member of the Economic and Social Council and we are ready to work hard to help it to achieve those goals. We trust that our determination will have the support of Member States and that they will support our candidacy in November's elections.

We feel quite optimistic about the Council's stepped up activity in 2006. We welcome the Bureau's decision to prepare key resolutions in New York for adoption at Geneva during the Council's substantive session. I believe that the preparatory work contributed to the adoption of well-considered and balanced decisions at Geneva. We do not agree with delegations that have expressed the view in consultations on Council reform that there is duplication in the work of the substantive sessions of the Economic and Social Council with that of the General Assembly's Second and Third Committees. The General Assembly adopts policy decisions as regards multifaceted international processes, for which prior work is often needed in the context of more specialized bodies that have a smaller membership. Complementarity between the work of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly will lead to better coordination in the activities of United Nations bodies.

Based on Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/27, a meeting of the funds and programmes of the United Nations and other international organizations was held in Tokyo in September 2006 with a view to strengthening cooperation in the area of combating human trafficking. The conclusions and recommendations emanating from that meeting were part of the recent draft resolution introduced by Belarus and adopted in the Third Committee regarding improving the coordination of efforts to combat trafficking in persons. We believe that the ideas in Council resolution 2006/24 on international cooperation in the fight against corruption and in Council resolution 2006/5 on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations will be helpful in preparing draft resolutions to be adopted on these topics at this session of the General Assembly.

The Economic and Social Council must play a key role in preparing the triennial comprehensive

review of operational activities for development during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The Council plays an irreplaceable role in evaluating the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment. Conclusions and proposals of the Council on those issues will constitute a real contribution by the Council to the reform and renewal of the activities of the entire United Nations in the social, economic, environmental and humanitarian spheres.

We welcome the measures taken by the Council to promote the United Nations system-wide reform process. In that regard, an important step was the Council's approval of the workplan to reform the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the revised terms of reference of the Commission. We believe that the implementation of those decisions will help the ECE to take its work to a qualitatively higher level and to adapt it to changes that have taken place in recent years in the Central and Eastern European regions. Implementation will also help the Commission to focus international assistance on European countries most in need.

We should also not forget the work done by the Economic and Social Council on the review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society.

The foregoing constitutes the contributions of the Economic and Social Council to the work we are doing together. They provide us an opportunity to realize the importance of the efforts of the Economic and Social Council to our collective decisions to address acute international issues in the social, economic, environmental and humanitarian fields. Our task here is to establish the requisite working conditions to enable the Council to work well and play its complex coordinating and organizational role. Belarus has always believed that the Economic and Social Council should not just be a sort of testing ground for saving money. We believe that the support provided to the Council must be commensurate with its role and the tasks allocated to it. If we do that, we shall all benefit.

Mr. Gutiérrez García (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the 2005 World Summit — which is also known as the United Nations reform summit, for having placed

the issue of development outside the distorted focus on security and ambitious proposals for the Organization's reform — there was agreement on the need for a more effective Economic and Social Council as the principal organ in the coordination, political review and recommendation of issues associated with economic and social development. Nevertheless, little more than a year after reaching that agreement, we are still engaged in a complicated and protracted negotiation process regarding the future of that important organ. That is due to the clear lack of political will and flexibility on the part of developed countries, which, far from wanting true strengthening of the Council, are attempting to reinvent it with the aim of weakening its role and functions.

The agreements contained in the Summit Outcome regarding the Economic and Social Council do not substantially reformulate that organ's mandate or its major activities. That confirms the importance of also strengthening the work of the General Assembly's Second and Third Committees. The revitalization of the work of the Economic and Social Council should continue to be carried out in accordance with what was agreed in Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B. The Economic and Social Council should continue to carry out its mandate in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the functions assigned to it by the Assembly for the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the decisions adopted by the major United Nations conferences and summits through resolution 57/270 B.

We view positively the fact that the Economic and Social Council is endeavouring to place particular focus on development issues. However, ideas relating to new subjects should not be implemented to the detriment of the current functions of the Council concerning humanitarian issues and the coordination of and follow-up to the operational activities of the United Nations system.

The revitalization of the Economic and Social Council should not imply opening up new areas for dialogue which do not contribute results or firm commitments, but rather should preserve the negotiated outcomes of the different segments of this organ.

Although the Development Cooperation Forum should be held every two years, as established by the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, it should occur without prejudice to the meetings of the

Economic and Social Council during the substantive session. The Forum should not only be a place for dialogue between interested parties, but rather, preferably, a mechanism to identify and foster concrete cooperation efforts at all levels. In that regard, it is important to highlight the central role that Member States should continue to play in that context, as well as the importance of adequately regulating the participation of stakeholders such as the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil societies in general.

The ministerial level review of the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, should not become an area only for debate but rather should continue to be an opportunity to reach a negotiated agreement at that high level. The review should also continue to be carried out within the mandate given to the Economic and Social Council under resolution 57/270 B.

Furthermore, the special meetings of the Economic and Social Council that are convened to address humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters should not replace the function of the General Assembly to address those issues. Moreover, the subjects of such meetings should be adequately chosen, according to their relevance, as well as the right moment to convene them, so they do not become an additional burden for Member States, especially during the periods when the General Assembly committees are meeting.

It is imperative that, in accordance with the consensual decisions of the international community, the humanitarian assistance activities be carried out under the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality while respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of States. Likewise, it is an inescapable principle that assistance be provided at the request of States and with their consent, and also that each State play a key role from the start in the organization and implementation of the assistance within its territory.

Cuba supports the goal of improving the efficiency of the Economic and Social Council, but it will continue to uphold, along with the developed countries, the validity and importance of the role of the Economic and Social Council as a principal organ of

the United Nations, and will oppose any attempt to weaken it and to limit its decision-making power.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 42.

Agenda item 43

Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/176)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.15)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, circulated in document A/61/176. I give the floor to the representative of Greece to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.15.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): It is with great honour and pleasure that I present today to the General Assembly the draft resolution on the "Return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin", contained in document A/61/L.15, under agenda item 43.

In recent years, the international community has become increasingly sensitive to this issue. It has demonstrated its willingness to facilitate the return or restitution of cultural property illicitly removed from its country of origin. Such removal, especially when it results from illicit trade, runs counter to all the principles culture is supposed to promote.

As we all know, the illicit removal of cultural property from its place of origin is a grave loss to the country concerned and its people. Cultural property taken out of context — that is to say, out of its natural environment — is stripped of its meaning and cut off from its natural, cultural and geographical background. Culture is the lifeblood of a nation. Its removal rips out the nation's heart and obliterates its past.

Furthermore, it should be emphasized that the illicit removal or destruction of cultural property deprives people of a part of their past. One has only to consider the intentional destruction of unique works of art, as in the case in Afghanistan under the previous regime, in order to understand that such a loss can

never be remedied, as those treasures can never be brought back.

It is only the restitution of cultural property, taken illicitly from its place of origin, that will restore any damage caused to cultural heritage. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that Member States of the United Nations continue to cooperate actively, both bilaterally and in international forums, in a spirit of mutual understanding and dialogue, with a view to resolving any outstanding issues in that respect.

Such cooperation constitutes the most appropriate way to address the adverse effects of major political and other upheavals, including armed conflict, that have provided fertile ground for the loss, destruction, removal or illicit movement of cultural property.

In the draft resolution we have the honour to present, we tried to reflect the latest steps and activities that have been undertaken by the international community, especially in the framework of UNESCO, which has a unique responsibility as the sole agency with the mandate of promoting the stewardship of the world's cultural resources at all levels.

As in previous years, specific reference is made to a number of relevant conventions. The need for their proper implementation is also highlighted. The increase in the number of States parties to these conventions is a most encouraging trend.

Other important developments include the launching in 2005 of the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Laws Database, as well as the elaboration of a model export certificate for cultural objects. Both of these instruments are extremely useful tools in the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property. Equally important is the effective work, the relevant recommendations and the recent revision of the statutes of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation.

At this point, I am very pleased to inform the Assembly of the return, from the University of Heidelberg, of a fragment from the Parthenon's north frieze. This gesture has symbolic value: it constitutes the first step towards the reunification of the Parthenon sculptures. The new Acropolis Museum will soon reach its completion, where the Parthenon Marbles will be

presented, reunified, in their natural historical environment.

In the international framework, as a result of closer collaboration between museum institutions, Greece has accomplished the return of a gravestone from the Boeotia region of ancient Greece from the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, as well as of a fragment of a marble relief from the Greek island of Thasos.

We strongly encourage all interested parties of the international community to continue to cooperate, within the framework of the United Nations and UNESCO, for increased mobilization and action to promote heritage values and to safeguard, return and encourage restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin.

Public awareness is once more a crucial part of this endeavour; it also involves Governments, civil society, academic and artistic leadership, and, of course, all of us who feel that we share a common cultural heritage.

I would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, as well to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, for the tireless, constant and meaningful support they have provided on this issue. I wish to thank them for their detailed report, contained in document A/61/176, which covers a three-year period and presents all the activities that have taken place to facilitate the return and restitution of cultural property.

Action on draft resolution A/61/L.15 will be taken at a later stage; in the meantime, we will consult closely with all interested delegations. We look forward to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus, as in previous years, and with the widest possible sponsorship, larger by far than that of previous years.

As we approach the end of the Year of the Olive Route, the symbolic value of which brings different cultures together, let us send a strong message about the return of cultural goods to their countries of origin.

Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me pleasure to express our appreciation and thanks to the President of the General Assembly for her excellent conduct of the Assembly's work at its sixty-first session. I would also like to take this opportunity to convey to her the congratulations of the Sudanese

women on her assumption, as the first Arab woman, of the presidency, which is a great honour to us.

My delegation would like to pay tribute to the report of the UNESCO Director-General (A/61/176). We appreciate the important role that UNESCO has played over the last three years to facilitate the return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin and to encourage Member States to implement the relevant resolutions and instruments on this subject.

My country would also like to express its appreciation for the development of the model export certificate as a tool to combat illicit trafficking in cultural property. We call on Member States to adopt the model export certificate as their national export certificate. We also express satisfaction at the tremendous effort made to establish the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Laws Database so that legislation on cultural heritage can be easily accessed. We call on the organization to offer official translations of the Database in all official languages, including Arabic.

The importance of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation at its twelfth and thirteenth sessions acquires greater force, especially as regards the accession to relevant international conventions, such as The Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property During Armed Conflict and its additional protocols, the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and the Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects of the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law. We welcome all of those instruments, and we call on all Member States, with their ancient cultural heritage, to sign them in order to combat illicit trafficking and looting of cultural properties.

Over the past few years, in particular, the world has witnessed several attempts to steal the national cultural property of several countries. We call on the United Nations, through UNESCO, to exert greater efforts for the return and restitution of precious historical cultural property, and we advocate the creation of a legal mechanism to deter thieves, by

establishing a tribunal to adjudicate these crimes. In that way, the world would be spared such cultural looting, and would preserve and protect such property.

The delegation of the Sudan would like to emphasize the importance of cooperation and the exchange of information, which could not take place without specialized training in the field of protection of cultural property and exchange of information. Whether it is through the UNESCO Database, Interpol or other available means and mechanisms, we support the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee at its thirteenth session, which called for urgent solutions regarding the Parthenon marbles and their return to the country of origin, through dialogue leading to positive results. We also support the Committee's recommendation regarding the restitution of the sphinx to its country of origin through bilateral negotiations. We also support other recommendations made by the UNESCO Director-General — particularly recommendation no. 8, which relates to Afghanistan and Iraq.

My delegation would like to point out that throughout its history, the brotherly country of Iraq has been long subjected to acts of pillage and destruction and the burning of relics and manuscripts, and has been robbed of its cultural property. However, the catastrophe in that regard following the collapse of the former regime poses a great threat at a time when humanity has reached new heights in terms of culture, civilization, intellectual, scientific, economic and industrial dimensions. It was hoped that that would be reflected in an appreciation of the value of that cumulative heritage and culture. In fact, this catastrophe occurred in full view of the international community, which is supposed to be ruled by law and the provisions of international law. The restitution or return of Iraq's cultural property is as important as its reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The Government of National Unity, which inherited the laws protecting the Sudan's long cultural heritage, is in the process of amending and strengthening those laws to enhance their protection of that national heritage and cultural property and to enable us to discover new cultural treasures and to record them in the national archives after being transferred to national museums. My country, with its unique and rare cultural legacy, wishes to emphasize its resolve to cooperate with UNESCO and other relevant international organizations and agencies in joint efforts

to return cultural property to the countries of origin and thus to attain the noble United Nations objective of preserving and protecting our human heritage and experiences.

Mr. Al Bayati (Iraq) (spoke in Arabic): My delegation is taking the floor under agenda item 43, on the return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin. Undoubtedly, that item is firmly based on the role of human culture in civilization, which is a characteristic of the development of all civilizations and their interdependence, although every culture has its essential characteristics. It is important to return cultural property to the countries of origin, particularly because such property represents the living memory of peoples who are trying to recover the cultural identity of their civilizations, which have been reduced or plundered in the past.

Thus, it is essential that the General Assembly consider this item, because it is an important area for strengthening the means to promote international cooperation. Although the Assembly has considered this issue since 1972, what has actually been accomplished remains well below the level of our expectations. In that regard, we believe it has become essential that the United Nations and its specialized agencies — particularly UNESCO — and other international bodies and organizations that monitor this illicit trade be provided with up-to-date means to monitor acts of pillaging and illicit trafficking.

The efforts undertaken by States interested in human civilization, by organizations interested in the protection of monuments and relics and by Interpol to combat such operations and to recover stolen property are still very modest compared with the scale of this human and cultural catastrophe, the diversity of its causes, the criminals and the criminal organizations to which they belong.

It is well known that my country, Iraq, is the cradle of human civilization. On its shores, the first letters of writing were inscribed 4,000 years before Christ and the first laws were codified. On its soil, the first components of states, were established, and in its temples and on the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates in the north and in the south, treaties among those ancient entities were concluded.

Iraq's monuments and relics have eternalized the stages of the development of that civilization since early times, and the world's major museums still

preserve some of those prominent monuments. But the neglect and the illicit trafficking to which our documents have been subjected since the second Gulf war and the catastrophe following the collapse of the former regime are unprecedented in modern history. Iraqi monuments, whether at archaeological sites or in Iraqi museums, have been the targets of arbitrary and organized plundering and pillaging operations. Most of those operations have been conducted by elements of international organized crime, and some of these Iraqi monuments are now often seen in international museums and auction houses. From this rostrum, my delegation calls on all States and the international community and all its institutions to help Iraq protect its right to recover its cultural property and monuments. Without such assistance, it would be very difficult to attain that objective.

In that regard, my delegation wishes to emphasize paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 1483 (2003), in which the Council decided that all Member States should take appropriate steps to facilitate the safe return to Iraqi institutions of Iraqi cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, and religious importance that were illegally removed from the Iraq National Museum, the National Library and other locations in Iraq, including by instituting a prohibition on trade in or transfer of such items, and items with respect to which reasonable suspicion exists that they have been illegally removed. We call upon UNESCO, Interpol and other international organizations, as appropriate, to assist in implementing that paragraph.

I wish to express my delegation's appreciation for the efforts of UNESCO and the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation and their role in organizing the bilateral negotiations aimed at the return of cultural property, in preparing a list of existing property and in curbing the illicit trafficking of cultural property. In particular, we ask all States and governmental and civil society organizations to cooperate to ensure the success of those efforts.

Mr. Zewdie (Ethiopia): Allow me at the outset to express my appreciation to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its continued support for efforts to return cultural property to the countries of origin, in

accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/17, of 19 December 2003.

Ethiopia strongly and firmly believes in the principle that cultural property should not be exported from the countries of origin. It also attaches great importance to the return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin. Despite its firm commitment to the protection of cultural properties, Ethiopia has a vast amount of cultural resources abroad that have not yet been returned.

In an effort to address the issue of the return or restitution of cultural property, Ethiopia has taken tangible measures and actions at both the national and the international levels. In this respect, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some remarkable actions we have taken. My country has enacted a proclamation on heritage research and protection, which prevents Ethiopian heritage from being illegally exported or trafficked out of the country. It has also put in place an apparatus for the systematic inventory and registration of its cultural property through the establishment of a database of cultural legislation.

An effective customs control mechanism has also been introduced, in parallel with steps to enhance the capacity of customs experts through continuous training and education. Central to protecting our heritage and combating illicit trafficking is to increase public awareness of the value of our heritage.

In 2004, in a clear expression of our respect for international principles and provisions relating to the return or restitution of cultural property, Ethiopia signed the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. In the same year it also signed the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. My country has also reached numerous bilateral agreements with various countries aimed at preventing and combating illicit traffic in cultural properties.

My Government has pressed very hard for the return of confiscated heritage through diplomatic negotiations, legal procedures, purchases and other means. In this regard, Ethiopia rejoices that it has been able to buy back — among other items — many antique Axumite coins and the portrait of the son of an Ethiopian emperor from England and a twelfth century Ethiopian cross from Belgium.

With the cooperation of some countries, we have also succeeded in making major progress towards the restitution of magnificent artefacts. These include a statue of the "Conqueror Lion" and the throne of Empress Menen returned by Italy, and the Ethiopian traditional arms of Emperor Tewodros from England. The crowning achievement of these efforts was the return from Italy of the Axum Obelisk. Those are some of the achievements that must be credited to the peoples of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Government and, especially, the people and Governments of Italy, England, France, Belgium and other countries. We also thank UNESCO for facilitating their return. Our thanks also go to all of the friends of Ethiopia who have worked tirelessly to return to confiscated cultural properties to our country.

It is, indeed, with hope and enthusiasm that I mention the current attempt by Ethiopia to ensure the return, through the establishment of a committee comprising eminent personalities, intellectuals and foreign friends of Ethiopia, of its heritage taken by British soldiers in 1875. The Ethiopian people and Government are eagerly awaiting the return of other cultural property exported illegally by various means. For instance, there are more than 2,700 Ethiopian parchments in Europe, Asia, America and Canada. In this regard, my delegation calls upon the international community and the Governments of those countries to cooperate for the immediate restitution of our heritage.

Let me conclude by drawing the Assembly's attention to another effort that demands concerted action from the international community. Ethiopia is building a stockroom for the returned heritage, as well as a museum with a laboratory. It is the hope of my delegation that the international community will respond positively and quickly to assist Ethiopia in the accomplishment of these and other, related projects.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus): I am taking the floor to strongly support the draft resolution introduced by the representative of Greece on the return or restitution of cultural property to the countries of origin.

Cyprus considers this very sensitive issue — in parallel, of course, with the protection and in situ preservation of cultural property — to be of paramount importance, and is deeply engaged in international efforts in this field.

We are a country that has been looted of many of its archaeological, cultural and religious treasures, and we understand the feelings of people who have been deprived of this important link to their history and civilization.

Important steps have already been taken to put in place the required legal and institutional framework for the return or restitution of cultural property. In this regard, I should like to praise the work undertaken by UNESCO and, in particular, by the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in Case of Illicit Appropriation. Now we need to focus more on implementation.

In this regard, I would like to express the hope that cases such as the return to Cyprus of the mosaics of Panayia Kanakaria and the return to Greece by the University of Heidelberg of a fragment from the Parthenon's north frieze will lead the way to greater awareness and further restitution of cultural property, including the Elgin Marbles, which have become the litmus test for the success of this lofty endeavour.

The draft resolution before us is an important testimony to the political will of the international community to achieve swift progress in this important field.

Cultural treasures are the visible footprints of the path of man through history. They are testimony to the ways found by those who preceded us to decode infinity, and constitute the connecting link with the vertical dimension, with the ideals of beauty and humanism, embodying spiritual values and the best of human skills. They are, therefore, at any given time and at any given place, the highest combined expression of the mind and of the work of human hands.

Hence, cultural property is a prominent part of the common heritage of humanity, and its presence in its rightful place is a major contribution to reconciling and reconnecting with the roots of human civilization and to promoting universal values and creation as the main vectors of cultural development.

The Acting President (spoke in Arabic): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/61/L.15 will be taken at a later date.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 43.

Agenda item 44

Culture of peace

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/175)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.11)

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), document A/61/175. I give the floor to the representative of the Philippines to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.11.

Mr. Baja (Philippines): The rise of a number of initiatives on interfaith, intercultural and intercivilizational dialogue and cooperation, evidenced by several international, interregional, regional and national events, represents growing global interest in the sustained implementation of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace, a brainchild of Bangladesh, as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action, an initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

During the last two years, the Philippine initiatives, supported by a large number of Member States, on interfaith dialogue, namely the Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, held in New York on 22 June 2005, and the Informal Summit on Interfaith: Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace, also held in New York on 13 September 2005, helped pave the way for the adoption of paragraph 144 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome by our leaders.

The leaders committed themselves to take action to promote a culture of peace and support initiatives on dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions. This year, the Tripartite Forum on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation was launched in New York on 24 March. The fourteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana, adopted a final document on 16 September recognizing the importance of interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace. The First Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue and Cooperation for Peace, as well as the high-level Conference on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, were

both held in New York during the United Nations International Day of Peace on 21 September.

At the regional level, the Cebu Dialogue among South-East Asian and Pacific countries adopted a Declaration on Regional Interfaith Cooperation for Peace, Development and Human Dignity on 16 March. The Sixth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), held in Helsinki on 10-11 September, underlined the importance of the ASEM Interfaith Dialogue and recognized the value of the Alliance of Civilizations and the tripartite forum on Interfaith Cooperation for Peace. ASEM partners also adopted on 5 July in Larnaca, Cyprus, an Action Plan on Interfaith Understanding and Cooperation for a Peaceful World.

From the standpoint of civil society, the world saw the largest ever gathering of religious leaders in Kyoto last August under the auspices of the World Conference on Religion and Peace. Kazakhstan hosted last September in Astana the Second Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. The outcomes of both events reinforce and complement the conclusions of the forums of their intergovernmental counterparts.

Within the United Nations system, UNESCO agreed that interreligious dialogue is its flagship project for the biennium 2006-2007 under its intercultural dialogue programme. Moreover, there are several United Nations agencies, funds and programmes that include interreligious dialogue in their activities.

These expressions of the need for greater understanding, harmony and cooperation will continue to flourish and expand both in scale and scope. In fact, the latest initiative on the Alliance of Civilizations, co-sponsored by Spain and Turkey, is another testament to the need to involve all stakeholders in peace.

Allow me at this juncture, on behalf of the Philippines and Pakistan, to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.11, entitled "Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace". The Philippines and Pakistan decided to consolidate our respective draft resolutions under the agenda item on culture of peace, not only to respond to the need to streamline the work of the General Assembly in respect of interrelated draft resolutions, but more importantly to highlight the interconnected dimensions of religions and cultures in promoting a culture of peace.

The world, in particular the faith communities and their leaders and other stakeholders, is watching how we will address the culture of peace from the prism of interfaith and intercultural dialogue and cooperation. We hope the Assembly will adopt the draft resolution at an early opportunity so that we could move forward to implement concrete measures, particularly those mentioned in operative paragraphs 7 to 12. We warmly welcome the additional sponsorship by Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Cambodia, Congo, Costa Rica, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Gabon, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Micronesia, Morocco, Myanmar, Senegal, the Sudan, Thailand and Timor-Leste, and look forward to further sponsorship and support from Member States.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.16, which will be issued at a later date.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): I would be remiss if I began without expressing our deep appreciation to the Assembly President for convening a debate on the agenda item "Culture of peace". This item is close to every Bangladeshi heart. I am confident that the deliberations today, under the able stewardship of the President, will further strengthen our resolve to promote a culture of peace in the United Nations and beyond.

I thank the previous speaker, Ambassador Lauro Baja of the Philippines for providing full details of draft resolution A/61/L.11.

Recent history has witnessed a series of triumphs that humanity can justly be proud of. It has experienced, for example, the end of colonialism, the growth of civil society, the limiting of autocracy, the strengthening of democratic values and institutions, the rise of liberalism and the protection and promotion of human rights. Sadly, this period has also witnessed many tragedies. It has experienced unspeakable violence wreaked by wars, terror and conflicts. It has brought death, destruction and suffering to millions.

A culture of peace is an idea that encapsulates the very essence of the efforts to save humanity from the scourge of war and conflict. It is a set of values and attitudes, a mode of behaviour and a way of life to rid our communities of terror and violence. The process of a culture of peace is based on freedom, justice,

democracy, tolerance and respect for diversity and dialogue.

The United Nations has been playing a crucial role in propagating peace over the decades of its existence. At the World Summit, our leaders reaffirmed the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. They also committed themselves to taking action to promote this programme at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Following last year's observance of the midpoint of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, we have entered into the second half of the Decade with great enthusiasm and vigour. This calls for renewal of commitments towards the noble goals of peace.

Bangladesh has always been at forefront of the initiatives that promote greater understanding and tolerance among peoples, which in our belief are achievable through dialogue and cooperation. Our attachment to a culture of peace is owed to our long struggle for national independence. Bangladesh, born of a bloody conflict, sees, therefore, great value in the principles of tolerance, respect for diversity, democracy and understanding. These ideals were realized by the Membership by the adoption in 1999 of the Declaration and the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. Bangladesh was honoured to lead the process.

The Programme of Action identifies some major areas of focus, in particular, education, sustainable economic and social development, human rights, equality between men and women, democratic participation, advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity, participatory communication and free flow of information and knowledge, and international peace and security. Specific sub-areas are set out in each area of focus that would help bring our goals to fruition.

The adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action was of great significance. It provided a clear set of guidelines for action. The text advanced the cause of non-violence. It was a universal document in the real sense, transcending boundaries, cultures, societies and nations. It involved various actors such as States, international organizations, civil society, community leaders, parents, teachers, artists, professors, journalists and humanitarian workers. We believe that the participation of all actors is essential if the building of a peaceful world is to be accomplished

through the convergence of ideas, rather than through confrontation.

Bangladesh is well known for having always sought to play a major role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Its commitment to United Nations peacekeeping remains unflinching, having so far contributed more than 58,000 peacekeepers to 37 United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are pledged and willing to do more if called upon.

At home, Bangladesh society has been undergoing a significant positive transformation, particularly in the field of socio-economic development — poverty reduction, raising per capita income, maintaining food security, maintaining a gross domestic product growth rate of over 5 per cent for over two decades, increasing resilience to meet natural disasters, improving the human development index, reducing gender disparity, and improving social and health indicators.

From our national experience, we believe that gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women are categorical imperatives for development, as well as for social stability and peace. Access to education and health, combined with provisions for microcredit facilities, can unleash the entrepreneurial skills of women. The empowerment of women tends to marginalize extremist thought and action in the community, thereby addressing a root cause of violence and terror. The award of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize to microcredit pioneer Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh clearly demonstrates the linkage between poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and peace. Bangladesh, despite its many and varied constraints, has set an example in this domain. It stands ready to share its best practices with other societies of comparable milieu.

We are at a crossroads in advancing our goals pertaining to a culture of peace, having crossed the midpoint of the Decade. We wish to express our gratitude to all actors that have contributed to its promotion. In this connection, we applaud the role of UNESCO, as well as other involved organizations within and outside the United Nations system. We are particularly thankful to civil society, including non-governmental organizations and young people, including the young foot soldiers of the Fundación Cultura de Paz. We still have a long way to go and

much remains to be done. We urge everyone to continue their good work; at this critical juncture, a strengthened global partnership is an absolute must.

We believe that the promotion of a culture of peace is of paramount importance, particularly today, when conflicts bred of misunderstanding and intolerance abound. It is in this perspective that I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010" (A/61/L.16).

The draft contains some technical updates vis-à-vis last year's resolution 60/3, including the following additional elements: in the final preambular paragraph, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is welcomed and encouraged, in operative paragraphs, to promote the culture of peace and non-violence for children in its activities. At the sixtieth session, this resolution received a record 107 sponsors. It is our fond hope that this year, too, delegations will accord similar support to our initiative, reflecting global solidarity in the endeavours to achieve this noble aim. It is our belief that some day this resolution will carry the sponsorship of each and every delegation.

Our ultimate objective is to create a world that is peaceful and stable, where the ambience is appropriate for development, where the environment is protected, where rule of law and observance of human rights are the norms, where different civilizations and religions coexist side by side in harmony and where the preponderant value is a culture of peace. This draft resolution is but one way towards reaching that goal. We hope it will receive all delegations' enthusiastic support.

Mr. Tornudd (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania, the candidate countries Turkey and Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Serbia, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The Declaration on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the Assembly seven years ago, set out a number of important principles that retain their full validity today. A culture of peace is not a target to be reached once and forever. It comprises an ongoing process of dialogue, education and participation.

The European Union is favourably impressed with the enthusiasm that has resulted in such a large number of initiatives being advanced under this heading. We look forward to further practical action at the international, regional, national and local levels in order to advance the various objectives contained in the Declaration on a Culture of Peace.

The subject is, in fact, so vast that our comments on this occasion will address only some of the points that are relevant to the specific initiatives and actions that we are set to examine.

We are grateful to the Director-General of UNESCO, who has provided us with an updated report (A/61/175) on the work undertaken by his organization. We note with particular satisfaction that the efforts to foster a culture of peace seem to have permeated the activities of a very large number of bodies and organizations within the United Nations system. We are also happy to note that civil society has been actively engaged in furthering the objectives of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World.

The declarations and other statements on a culture of peace that we make in the plenary meetings of intergovernmental organizations will have no value if their substance is not felt in the lives of ordinary people. The role of youth is particularly important in this regard. We hope that youth groups and youth organizations will play a prominent role in all activities related to the culture of peace.

We have taken note of the recommendations contained in concluding paragraph 59 of the report of the Director-General of UNESCO and hope that they will inspire Member States to take action accordingly and to enhance their efforts in human rights education. We also have full confidence in the ability of UNESCO to continue monitoring activities in this field. In view of the long-term relevance of this matter, the European Union would, for its part, and with the agreement of other Member States, actually be ready to deal with this matter in the General Assembly every two years, instead of every year, as has been the case to date. Specific subjects coming under the heading of a culture of peace could, of course, be taken up as the need arises.

Among the ongoing projects of importance in this context, we are obviously aware of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, although it is not the

focus of our attention this year. We look forward to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of this Dialogue, which is due at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. The alliance of civilizations, on the other hand, is of immediate importance. Since the report of the High-Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations is expected later this month, we hope that there will be opportunities in the near future to seek inspiration in their document for practical action to promote tolerance and understanding between all cultures and religions.

Furthermore, we should be mindful of Security Council resolution 1624 (2005), which calls upon all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding between civilizations in an effort to prevent the indiscriminate targeting of different religions and cultures, as well as to counter the incitement of terrorist acts motivated by extremism and intolerance.

At the same time, the European Union wishes to emphasize the paramount importance of freedom of expression. We are deeply convinced that fruitful dialogue cannot be guided by Government authorities. There is no point in drawing up strategies or guidelines for an interchange between societies representing different civilizations unless it has a firm base in free and spontaneous participation in the public debate. The best way to suppress extremist views and incitement to hatred is to let such utterances wilt and die in open debate, where they have no chance of survival. The full richness of cultural dialogue will flourish in a climate of free expression.

It is up to Governments, of course, to provide the proper framework for freedom of expression. This means that full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is of central importance. Most human rights are of such a nature that their enjoyment can be further promoted in all societies, regardless of their stage of economic and social development. We can all do better. Freedom of religion, for example, is not only the absence of prohibitions; it can also include creating appropriate conditions for the practice of religion without discrimination.

Likewise, exercising the right to education in the context of a culture of peace should include efforts to promote education for peace. That is, in fact, one of the longstanding ambitions of UNESCO. Finally, all public

dialogue will benefit from the increased participation of women and young persons.

The European Union will examine attentively the draft resolutions submitted under the item on a culture of peace, and looks forward to constructive cooperation with other delegations on this subject.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): At the outset, I would like to commend UNESCO for its leading role in the process of fostering the culture of peace and for its recent comprehensive report (A/61/175), which reflects the broad range of activities carried out by the United Nations system, international institutions and civil society in implementing various programmes and initiatives put forward under agenda item 44, which is now under consideration.

Kazakhstan strongly believes that the culture of peace starts within us when we learn how to respect the inherent worth and dignity of other cultures and religions, and when we allow them to keep up their traditions. The moral standing of any society is judged by how it treats other nations and other peoples' cultures.

The emergence of new challenges and threats to humankind, particularly the rise of religious extremism, which threatens security and stability in the world, makes the need for dialogue among cultures and religions even more urgent. A principal objective of this dialogue is to bridge the gap in knowledge about others. It is important to remember that lack of knowledge and understanding and lack of respect for various cultures and religions has already prepared the ground for hatred.

Intolerance and conflict can be prevented through tireless efforts in day-to-day activities, and by taking timely and concrete actions at the local, national and international levels. Education is the key to promoting tolerance.

We commend the valuable contribution of various initiatives on the promotion of a dialogue among religions, cultures and civilizations, including the Dialogue among Civilizations, the Alliance of Civilizations, the Enlightened Moderation strategy and the Interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace initiative. We consider all of these to be mutually inclusive, reinforcing and interrelated. Kazakhstan, as a member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, shares its aims and looks forward to the

report of the high-level panel, which is expected to contain concrete recommendations for the promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among religions.

Historically, the territory of Kazakhstan has been a meeting place for a variety of different religions and civilizations. The population of Kazakhstan is made up of more than 130 ethnic groups and 46 religious denominations. A balanced internal policy has encouraged dialogue between these diverse cultures and this has resulted in a multicultural society with universal values. The culture of the Kazakh people, characterized by tolerance and openness to innovation, has become the backbone of the spiritual integration we have achieved.

The Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan, a unique and effective mechanism to pursue a policy towards ethnic groups, was established in 1995. The Assembly has a consultative and advisory status under the President of Kazakhstan. It works to ensure revival of national cultures, languages and traditions, strengthen interethnic unity and develop recommendations and proposals on State policy in the area of interethnic relations.

The Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held in 2003 in our capital, Astana, has become Kazakhstan's tangible contribution to the strengthening and broadening of interfaith dialogue. One month ago, a second Congress completed its deliberations in Kazakhstan, bringing together high-level religious and political representatives who discussed the Congress' main theme, religion, society and international security. The Congress adopted a Declaration to Enhance the Role and Responsibility of Religious Leaders in the Strengthening of International Security, which was issued as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Another substantive outcome of the Congress is a decision to establish, under the auspices of the Congress, an international centre of cultures and religions to carry out educational, research and humanitarian projects and to study potential crisis aspects of the religious situation in the world. Congress participants came to understand the need to establish permanent dialogue, which will provide an opportunity to identify paths to peaceful coexistence between confessions and reduce the risk of religious extremism. The Congress has become an important contribution to

peace, accord and broader dialogue among religions and is becoming a credible permanent international forum.

Taking into consideration the importance of dialogue among religions and cultures, our delegation proposes an international year of dialogue among religions and cultures. Such a proposal has been included in a draft resolution, submitted by the Philippines and Pakistan, entitled Promotion of inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace (A/61/L.11). As a sponsor, we hope that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus and that the Members States will therefore show their strong commitment to the promotion of interreligious and inter-ethnic dialogue and concord.

Our delegation also supports and co-sponsored the draft resolution on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for Children of the World, 2001-2010 (A/61/L.16).

Let us work together to take concrete measures to identify and reduce the causes of disagreement between nations, cultures and religions. The world community should foster a model of global culture that will be able to maintain peace, stability and dialogue among cultures and civilizations.

Mr. Alkashwani (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Historical events have shown that the dominance of the culture of violence and war in different parts of the world affected by disputes and conflicts has not only prevented the settlement of those conflicts, but has also led to an increase in violence. This in turn has led to an escalation of tension and discord in those regions and has fostered the culture of hatred and revenge among many generations, irrespective of their affiliations, not to mention the waste of natural and human resources that should have been utilized in the service of humanity. This requires us now, more than ever, to think seriously about how to promote a culture of peace instead of a culture of violence and war, which currently prevails in many volatile regions around the world.

The United Arab Emirates believes that the characteristics of the culture of peace — represented in promoting peaceful coexistence and non-violence among peoples and in containing and preventing conflicts through dialogue, understanding and disarmament — have proved the need for the international community to adopt a joint,

comprehensive and multilateral strategy in order to achieve three basic and parallel objectives.

First, the international community must demonstrate a serious political will, avoiding double standards, in order to find peaceful, lasting, just and comprehensive solutions for all the outstanding cases of dominance, colonialism and occupation leftover from the past, particularly the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East, which over the past 58 years have led to many wars and acts of violence, not only in our region, but also around the world.

Second, the dissemination of the concepts of peace should be at the core of sustainable human development. This requires the international community to adhere to the recommendations of United Nations summits on global development and its financing and to the principles of equality and social justice among peoples, particularly after conflicts were found to have been the inevitable consequence of continued competition between North and South and rich and poor, and considering other, local conflicts over control of sources of livelihoods and limited national resources.

Third, efforts to disseminate a culture of peace must include a fundamental transformation in the current values and attitudes of many States and communities, including political and extremist groups, that believe in the need to possess deterrent military and nuclear powers, as well as other means to achieve their self-serving ambitions and interests, or to address their own problems by force, with total disregard for the negative consequences of their acts for regional and international peace and security or for the stability of humankind in general.

With that understanding, we voice our support for all projects aimed at incorporating the principles of understanding, tolerance, respect for human rights, collaboration, gender equality and solidarity and mutual respect among peoples and States, and away from all forms of extremism and hatred in school curricula, in the media and in the educational and awareness programmes designed to consolidate and promote the best human practices and concepts.

In that context, we also affirm the importance of developing existing initiatives aimed at promoting partnership among stakeholders, including the private and public sectors and international and subregional organizations. That will lead to implementation of a

number of important and sustained programmes and events that are intended to promote dialogue among civilizations and peoples and the principles of peaceful coexistence, cultural diversity and religious and cultural cooperation. It will further ensure greater communication and harmony among peoples and enhance their mutual respect and interests, while preventing ongoing attempts to insult, discriminate and hold extremist positions against other religions and nationalities. As has been proven recently, such attempts can contribute to the escalation of tensions and potential conflicts.

The United Arab Emirates — which has pursued a sensible and balanced national and foreign policy based upon ancestral traditions and heritage, as well as on the principles of Islam and Islamic culture that call for solidarity, forgiveness, peaceful coexistence with other peoples, non-violence and respect for pluralism — has actively expanded its diplomatic relations and cultural and economic exchanges with most countries of the world, regardless of their political, economic and ideological orientation or religious beliefs. It has also supported mediation aimed at the containment and management of conflicts, disputes and hotbeds of tensions among States before they occur, and other efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction in post-conflict areas.

In order to consolidate its human principles and ethics in its people and in future generations, the United Arab Emirates has pursued a distinctive educational policy that focuses mainly on enhancing educational, media, cultural and social programmes and activities with a view to strengthening the application of the principles of tolerance, brotherhood, freedom, justice, respect for human dignity and human rights, the rule of law, and mutual respect for the cultures, religions and beliefs of other peoples. Those educational policies are also aimed at enhancing the openness of the society of the United Arab Emirates through globalization and current cultural progress, while keeping in mind the Emirates' unique characteristics, in order to ensure its greater participation in national, regional and international development plans so that it may benefit and gain from the present era of globalization.

Convinced of the importance of promoting respect for pluralism and for the rights of others, the Government has enacted a number of local laws and decisions to guarantee to foreign minorities living in

the United Arab Emirates the freedom to practice their religious, cultural and social beliefs, traditions and activities. It has encouraged the holding of cultural forums, symposiums, workshops and cultural exhibitions that have attracted intellectuals and journalists, and has included exhibits and folkloric musicians and bands from all over the world to enrich the knowledge and openness of Emirates society towards the diverse concepts and ideas of other civilizations, while taking into consideration its adherence to its own characteristics, heritage and environment.

Finally, we affirm our support for all efforts by the United Nations and its institutions, particularly UNESCO, towards the implementation of General Assembly resolution 60/3, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010". We hope that the deliberations on this item will contribute to strengthening our collective efforts to enhance international solidarity in fighting the culture of violence and confrontation and in building and consolidating peace in our international relations.

Mr. Elbadri (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, permit me to express our deep appreciation to UNESCO for its valuable report (*see A/61/175*), which includes an overview of activities to implement the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. It reflects the international agreement on fostering a Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, which in turn require a concerted effort on our part to operationalize the various visions and recommendations those initiatives entail.

The culture of peace is part of a profound vision of humanity that includes many elements at all levels, including the individual, society, the State and international relations. This culture, which we have adopted for achieving peace and as a sound foundation for international relations, will not be achieved through selective implementation, for it is an all-encompassing umbrella under which many concepts and principles are not only integrated but also complement one another. The world has never been in such need of a culture of peace as it is today. It is not only a necessity but a political responsibility to embrace and implement such a culture, to develop it into a strong foundation upon which we can base the concept of genuine collective security in conjunction with the respect for

international law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Today we face a decisive stage in the history of international relations. The number and varying patterns of interactions among States are increasing. This is a natural aspect of globalization that presents us with opportunities for cooperation, complementarity and the fulfilment of mutual interests. Yet certain misunderstandings between peoples and States could also arise as a by-product.

The diversity of cultures, religions, traditions and customs is a complementary aspect of humanity. We face a crossroads today, and our challenge is to avoid turning the added value of differences, the comparative advantage of plurality and the asset of diversity into means for dissension, divisions and conflicts at the international level. This is a time when we can invest in them for the benefit of the international community as a whole.

The means to achieve this noble aim are clear and the road map is well known and can be found in the different declarations and resolutions we have adopted in the General Assembly, be it the culture of peace or the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples. However, the real problem lies in the political intentions and will to implement such instruments. It is noteworthy that the enthusiasm that was visible when these instruments were adopted has not been the same at the implementation phase. Today, as we discuss the culture of peace, we have to admit that we have not invested in it properly as yet, and this deficiency must be corrected, as soon as possible.

Permit me in that context to discuss a subject closely associated with the culture of peace and which constitutes an important pillar in it, that of the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. This dialogue is a vehicle for mutual understanding, a means of overcoming misconceptions and a tool for confirming our mutual belief in a common future for humanity. As events have shown, this dialogue and the culture of peace are important pillars for the promotion of international harmony and peace. However, despite the multiplicity and interaction of initiatives and frameworks that call for activating the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions, the tangible result of that effort is far below our expectations. There are several basic reasons for that, the most important of which is that we have not implemented the initiatives

that we adopted here at the United Nations in this regard, in particular, the international agenda for the dialogue among civilizations, because of the lack of enthusiasm to enter into such an important and constructive dialogue among States, or because of our failure to realize the importance of this dimension in international relations.

We now need a collective effort to push forward and implement the dialogue on the basis of two connected actions: establishing a clear mechanism for such a dialogue, and ensuring that the political will exists to make it succeed.

Dialogue has always been the main instrument for interaction among peoples. We must now agree on how it should be implemented — through the activation of the culture of peace or of the dialogue among civilizations. It will be achieved primarily by ensuring mutual respect for each other and for each other's cultures, with all of their attributes — religions, traditions and customs.

In such a dialogue there is no place for cultural arrogance or monoculturalism. Peoples' experiences and customs must be respected in accordance with the principle of equality among all civilizations and cultures, whatever their various contributions to the civilization of humanity. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the important and enduring contribution to human civilization made by Islamic civilization.

We would like to underscore how important it is that such a dialogue focus on the commonalities that link us, not on the differences that separate us. Furthermore, we must prevent the dialogue from being politicized and must avoid double standards. We hope that all those aspirations will be met through the timely adoption of an initiative on the alliance of civilizations. The report being prepared by the group of eminent persons established by the Secretary-General to operationalize the initiative will be a first step towards the consideration and adoption of a draft resolution on this issue in the General Assembly.

Improving relations among States through the application of the culture of peace and the dialogue among civilizations remains an important challenge. But events at the international level reflect the urgent need to complement those two approaches with a third one. Today, we must lay the foundations for a value-oriented framework that calls for mutual respect — respect for other peoples' religious, cultural, historical

and civilizational experiences, backgrounds and heritages, as well as respect for the rights of others to be different and unique in faith and belief. We need to lay the foundation for a new culture that encompasses all of those elements and others so as to open the way for international, cultural and civilizational pluralism.

Today, we need a new culture of respect to be implemented, together with the culture of peace.

Mr. Shinyo (Japan): Last year, at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, world leaders reaffirmed the need to promote the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, as well as the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations and its Programme of Action. My Government greatly appreciates the fact that last year UNESCO, as the lead agency, conducted the mid-term global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010.

The culture of peace is based on respect for human rights, democracy and tolerance, the promotion of development, education for peace, the free flow of information and the wider participation of women as integral elements in preventing violence and conflict. All of the activities of the United Nations contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace. On the basis of the review, it is important to find effective approaches for the United Nations system, Member States and civil society to further strengthen the global framework in order to promote a culture of peace.

Japan believes that, if we are to ensure sustainable peace, it is essential to protect people from critical threats to human life and livelihood, and to ensure that people live lives of dignity. With this in mind, Japan strongly promotes the concept of human security and its approach. Let me briefly touch upon issues relating to education and the dialogue among civilizations, which are of particular interest to Japan.

As is often emphasized, peace, development and human rights are linked and complement one another. Japan's own experience in the 60 years since the Second World War bears testimony to that. Recognizing that basic education is a fundamental human right and that investment in education should be the basis for nation-building, Japan has provided official development assistance to the education sector amounting to \$4.7 billion over the past five years. In order to achieve the goal of education for all, Japan announced the Basic Education for Growth Initiative at

the Group of Eight Kananaskis Summit in 2002. This is an expression of Japan's commitment to supporting developing countries as they improve the quality of their basic education. While respecting their ownership, Japan supports the efforts made by developing countries with a view to ensuring for all the opportunity for primary education and improving the quality of education and educational administration systems.

In 2005, Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, who was Prime Minister of Japan at the time, proposed the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Japan, recognizing that one of the key factors in achieving sustainable development is education, has been contributing to the promotion of that Decade, in partnership with its lead agency, UNESCO, as well as with other international organizations and stakeholders, and we will continue that support in the future.

In the World Summit Outcome Document adopted in September 2005, world leaders acknowledged the diversity in the world, and reaffirmed that all cultures and civilizations contribute to the enrichment of humankind. Globalization, which can bring different civilizations closer, contributes many benefits to society, but it can sometimes also give rise to intolerance among people when they come into contact with cultures and civilizations different from their own. In order to deal with that unfortunate situation, it is of great importance to promote dialogue among people and civilizations, based on the spirit of tolerance and deep mutual understanding.

In that regard, Japan highly commends UNESCO for the major role it played in implementing the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. Within that framework, UNESCO has organized and sponsored a broad range of activities, conferences and other meetings that have focused on activities aimed at promoting dialogue among civilizations in various regions.

Japan believes that promoting mutual understanding of cultures and civilizations as well as mutually enhancing the development and the dignity of those who belong to different civilizations will contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace. With that in mind, Japan has been actively undertaking a series of efforts to deepen understanding among cultures and civilizations. Japan held the World Civilization Forum in July 2005 to share the

experiences of countries in preserving tradition while moving towards modernization. Japan has also held dialogues such as the Japan-Middle East Cultural Exchange and Dialogue Mission, and we hope to continue to promote similar dialogues in the future.

The culture of peace is a subject related to all human beings. Japan believes that it is of the utmost importance to continue our endeavours, in close cooperation with one another, to expand dialogue and

exchange views among cultures and civilizations in order to create a world of harmony and peace, where all human beings live on the basis of the principles of equality and mutual respect. I would therefore like to conclude my statement by reiterating that Japan is determined to redouble its efforts to bring about a culture of peace.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

48th plenary meeting

Friday, 3 November 2006, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 44 (continued)

Culture of peace

Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/175)

Draft resolutions (A/61/L.11 and A/61/L.16)

Mr. Zaki (Pakistan): Today we are considering the important agenda item entitled "Culture of peace". We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on this item contained in document A/61/175. Pakistan has had a long-standing association with this subject and has endeavoured to promote a culture of peace through its traditional resolution entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation" in the General Assembly. That resolution has been adopted by consensus in successive sessions of the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, which the General Assembly adopted in 1981, by resolution 36/55. Article 3 of the Declaration states that

"Discrimination between human beings on grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the

principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [of 1948]".

The Declaration encouraged the promotion of understanding, tolerance and respect for religion and belief and acknowledged that freedom of religion should contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples, and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism, racism and racial discrimination. Building on the same principles, in 1999 the General Assembly adopted the historic Declaration on a Culture of Peace, which emphasized the promotion of multilateral cooperation, respect for life, the ending of violence and the freedom and practice of non-violence through dialogue, cooperation and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The significance of those international commitments to promote tolerance and peace are particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where there is increased interaction among all cultures and civilizations. Such close interaction has given rise to new forms of exchanges and understanding among peoples across regions, and has provided unprecedented opportunities for the transmission of ideas.

Ironically, those vast networks of connectivity and interdependence have not only brought peoples closer to each other but, at the same time, have produced divisions and friction among and within

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societies. The proliferation of the sources and channels of information has, while promoting better knowledge of other peoples, quite often reinforced stereotypes and deepened differences and alienation. Indeed, the gulf of misunderstanding among faiths and civilizations seems to have grown wider. Quite often, those divisions and frictions are manifested in religious tones and tenors. There is both a knowledge deficit and an understanding deficit.

As the world today is composed of States with diverse political, economic, social and cultural systems that have been determined by their history, traditions and cultural values, the stability of international peace and security can only be guaranteed by the universal recognition of the rights of all peoples and nations to freely determine their own approach towards progress and development. The role of the General Assembly is imperative in building an environment conducive to creating an equitable world order, as envisaged in the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Acknowledging that important role, the President of the sixtieth session expressed strong commitment to the need for dialogue and understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions to prevent provocative incidents and to develop better ways of tolerance and respect for religions and beliefs. We hope that the sixty-first session, under the able leadership of its President, will continue that work and make a positive contribution to promote and advance much needed dialogue on the important and sensitive issue of respect for religions.

In her report to the sixty-first session, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief highlighted the alarming trend of religious intolerance in many regions of the world. The Rapporteur noted with concern that "tolerance between religious communities was [adversely affected by] the actions carried out by ... governmental bodies and ... the negative role played by ... media in stigmatizing certain religious communities." (A/61/340, para. 26)

The General Assembly, as well as the Human Rights Council, should assume the leading responsibility in developing ways and means to help avert the worst consequences of the defamation of religions manifested in instances of Islamophobia.

There are some embryonic legal elements in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Racial Discrimination that deal with incitement to religious hatred. While there is a need to sincerely invoke and apply all those existing mechanisms to promote understanding among religions and civilizations, there is also an urgent need to fill the juridical vacuum and redress the paucity of relevant laws that address issues relating to religious intolerance. In that regard, Pakistan would like to make the following proposals.

First, the General Assembly, as well as the Human Rights Council, through their appropriate resolutions and decisions, should condemn religious intolerance and address the defamation of religions, in particular the unwarranted linkage of Islam with violence and terrorism. The United Nations, in its endeavour to promote religious multiculturalism, should appeal to the larger membership to deter and discourage antagonism and discrimination against Islam and Muslim peoples.

Secondly, during its current session the General Assembly should hold a high-level event involving civil society organizations to focus on the issue of the incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance.

Following the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the General Assembly should encourage Member States to commence consultations to develop an international strategy to address the issue of religious intolerance and to prepare a legally binding instrument to combat the defamation of religion and prevent religious intolerance.

In order to promote harmony and cooperation among cultures and civilizations, President General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan has advanced a strategy of enlightened moderation that highlights the principles of enhancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, of forging harmony and understanding among all peoples and of seeking the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes. That strategy was endorsed by the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in 2003.

In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that, in line with our past practice to promote a culture of peace at the United Nations, Pakistan, in collaboration with the Philippines, will once again introduce a draft resolution on promoting religious and cultural

understanding during the sixty-first session. Inter alia, the draft resolution will emphasize the need to strengthen freedom, justice, tolerance, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions as important elements in building international peace and security.

It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt that draft resolution by consensus. That would be a manifestation of our collective resolve to promote peace, prosperity and hope for all, and a categorical rejection of intolerance, hatred and discrimination. It is imperative that ethnicity, religion, culture, language and race not be allowed to become a source of divisiveness among our common humanity. We the representatives assembled here must be the catalysts of cooperation, and not the prophets of doom. We must affirm the indivisibility of the human race. We must reassert our common humanity and our common universal values. It is only thus that we can build a stable structure of peace and harmony among all the peoples of the United Nations.

Mr. Aldai Ali (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure and honour to extend to the Acting President my congratulations and respect on his election to assist in presiding over the General Assembly, a forum for collaborative efforts to address human concerns. I am also especially pleased to congratulate Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as the first Arab woman to assume the presidency of the General Assembly.

My delegation has studied the report of the Secretary-General regarding the promotion of interreligious dialogue (A/60/201), as well as the report regarding the comprehensive mid-term review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), prepared by UNESCO and transmitted under a note by the Secretary-General (A/60/279). While we commend the progress achieved by Member States and agencies of the United Nations, as well as by non-governmental organizations, in the various areas covered by the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, we have also taken note of the hurdles that have impeded the achievement of progress in other areas.

Peace has been one of the major objectives of UNESCO since its establishment at the end of the Second World War. UNESCO has taken up the task of building the culture of peace in the minds of people

since the end of the twentieth century. That is a very complicated task, given the state of the world today, in which there is both war and major economic and strategic changes.

In defining the culture of peace, UNESCO has proven itself to be an organization of values, promoting common attitudes and behaviours based on non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights of human beings and in fostering understanding, tolerance and unity. It has done so in a framework of cooperation that encourages contributions by all social groups and promotes the exchange of information.

The culture of peace is closely linked to the promotion of development, economic and social security, democracy, political stability, disarmament, military security, economic equality and dialogue and international cohesion. Developing a culture of peace is based on shared international values, including respect for human life, freedom, justice, unity, tolerance, human rights and gender equality. It is well understood that peace based on justice, respect for human rights and individual dignity is also a humanitarian objective in its own right. Peace is the road to construction and stability and an avenue to creativity and innovation in all areas.

The Sudan's current generation was raised on the basis of the principles to which I have referred. Those principles have led to peace in my country. Today's generation was not raised to respect war and aggression. In fact, following the example of their great forefathers, our people have rejected war, injustice and persecution and have chosen to protect their land, honour and property. He who dies without protecting his land, honour and property is a martyr. Peace has also become a strategic objective of my country: it is the cornerstone of development and progress.

As the Sudan looks ahead to a bright future of peace, following many years of civil war that led to the deaths of more than 2 million of my fellow citizens and the displacement of more than 4 million women, children and the elderly — in addition to the destruction of infrastructure and natural resources — at the beginning of 2005 my country attained its most important achievement in its modern history, namely, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement covering the southern part of our country. That Agreement put an end to bloodshed that lasted for 22 years. Following

that very important development, the Sudan has focused its efforts on making the Agreement a reality. Now, nearly two years since the conclusion of the Agreement, the list of our accomplishments includes the implementation of several of the Agreement's provisions at the federal and provincial levels.

This year, my country added to that achievement yet another accomplishment by signing the Abuja Peace Agreement on Darfur. That undertaking was sponsored by the African Union and generously hosted by our sisterly country, Nigeria. My Government is hard at work to convince the other parties to adhere to the Agreement, in order that peace and stability may prevail throughout the Sudan. In that regard, I wish to say that my Government's efforts will continue. We have achieved a comprehensive peace agreement of utmost importance in the eastern part of the country. That accord was gratefully sponsored by our brotherly country, Eritrea.

In the context of that peaceful environment, the Sudan has worked to make the culture of peace a reality — transforming it from theory to daily practice. In that connection, with the assistance of United Nations specialized agencies, the Sudan launched a programme to help refugees and displaced persons return to their land. We have also provided assistance to those who have returned voluntarily so they may resume normal lives. In addition, we have successfully carried out a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, to enable former combatants to return to civilian lives, civil society and jobs. Moreover, we are working to make it possible for returnee children to continue their education through intensive educational programmes that include the principles and values of a culture of peace and tolerance.

Following that same approach, my Government has put in place special committees to amend laws to bring them into conformity with the transitional constitution, promulgate a law on political parties and speed up the process of national reconciliation and rehabilitation. In addition to putting in place special priority programmes to fulfil the requirements of peace and security by implementing and strengthening the principles of the Peace Agreement, my Government has also continued to set up appropriate machinery for conflict prevention and resolution. We have stepped up educational and awareness campaigns to promote the culture of peace by conducting studies on the resettling

of nomads and controlling the arbitrary expansion of agricultural projects, as well as by putting into effect local laws to resolve conflicts and disputes.

The Sudan is determined to continue to achieve a peaceful resolution for the issue of Darfur, a solution that is in the interests of the peoples of the region, and to implement fully the provisions of the agreements reached at Naivasha, Cairo, Abuja and eastern Sudan. Whenever possible, we will also work to speed up the establishment of the machinery agreed upon within the set timeframes, as agreed by the parties. We will also continue to address the issues of refugees and displaced persons.

My country is working to develop a federal regime on sound bases by expanding the authority and mandate of our provinces, at the expense of the central Government, as well as to bring development to those areas that are underdeveloped or that have been affected by war. We are also working to step up campaigns to raise awareness and guidance about the culture of peace, especially in tribal areas. We are trying to involve local, provincial and national authorities in the reconciliation process and to repatriate nomads, providing them with safe drinking water and enabling them to relocate in order to avoid tribal disputes.

In the field of information, the Sudan has worked to expand national and provincial radio and television programmes and broadcasts focusing on a culture of peace. A number of centres for the promotion of a culture of peace have been set up in universities and other places of higher learning, as well as in civil society organizations. The Sudan has also worked with the press and publications centre to raise awareness about a culture of peace and to encourage the expression of diverse local cultures and languages, under the theme of "Unity in diversity".

In that context, my Government has continued to devote particular attention to the issues of religion and of freedom of belief and worship, with emphasis on local religious beliefs. My Government has also established and supported a number of civil society organizations focusing on religion, a dialogue of cultures and peaceful coexistence.

My country is very concerned at current tensions and quarrels at the regional and international levels, given that certain Powers are fomenting and enjoying conflict among religions and cultures, defaming other

religions instead of respecting them and their followers. The caricatures that mocked our Prophet Muhammad and other such actions are reprehensible and will come back to haunt their perpetrators. This represents a setback in terms of our achievements in the context of the interreligious and intercultural dialogue. We must therefore ensure that a mechanism is put in place to put an end to any defamation of religions, cultures or societies, in order to maintain international peace, security and stability.

My country fulfilled its commitment to achieve the agreement that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It is continuing to deploy efforts in the western and eastern parts of the country to make the culture of peace and agreement thereon a reality. This will require that the international community fulfil the financial pledges it made at the Oslo donors conference. We hope that it will support the mechanisms necessary to ensure the full realization of the culture of peace and stability to which we all aspire.

We cannot speak of the maintenance of international peace and security in today's world without focusing on efforts to deal with emerging conflicts and their causes, in addition to promoting a multifaceted culture of peace by including Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the process.

Mr. Hamidon (Malaysia): My delegation is encouraged by the efforts of various United Nations bodies, under the coordination of UNESCO, to promote a culture of peace.

The decade 2001-2010 was designated as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. As we approach the end of 2006, a little more than midway through this decade, we should pause and reflect on whether our efforts have contributed to the realization of a culture of peace.

If we take peace to mean more than just the absence of war, but also justice and equity for all as a basis for living together in harmony and free from violence, I would point out, offering my own country as a humble example, that Malaysia has achieved that goal. This can be seen in the relations that characterize its multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural society.

It is no accident that this has been achieved. Since our independence, almost five decades ago, the Malaysian Government, through concerted and

consistent efforts, has sought to build a stable and prosperous nation by implementing policies that emphasize the creation of a just and equitable society, despite the different beliefs, religions and ethnicities of its people. In many ways, the socio-economic and political policies pursued by Malaysia in effect incorporate many of the areas for action outlined in the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Among the eight action areas in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, I would highlight the sixth, which concerns advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity. It was in this context, in 2001, that the United Nations commemorated the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. On that note, I have to say that we are still far from where we were five years ago in achieving understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples of the world, which are represented in the United Nations.

Let us recall that it was around this time a year ago that the world was shaken by images of the outpourings of discontent and anger that followed the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, a sacred figure central to the Islamic faith and close to the hearts of its faithful. Have we really learned any lessons from the pain, hurt and loss experienced on both sides, or was it all in vain?

We are fully aware that the world we live in is changing. Where there were once national borders separating peoples, borderlessness prevails. Goods, services and labour are flowing more freely due to the process of trade liberalization and globalization, but this has been accompanied by the opening of a Pandora's box. Ideas, beliefs and cultures intermingle and mix and, at times, as we have seen recently, could lead to explosive situations.

I would say that my country is not too different from New York City. They are both rich and teeming with life due to the kaleidoscopic makeup of their people. But this experience is not without its challenges, which we must address.

In that regard, allow me to quote from the preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO:

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Those words carry a deep meaning on which we should meditate, particularly here in the General Assembly, where the peoples of the world are represented and where we can have a meeting of the minds so as to seek to promote understanding, tolerance and solidarity, and, hopefully, achieve a culture of peace.

Mr. Zhang Dan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Civilization is a product of human progress and development. During its long history, humankind has created, nurtured and developed civilizations of all kinds. History has taught us that dialogue, exchanges and, indeed, convergence among various civilizations are a natural tendency and an intrinsic desire on the part of all civilizations aimed at their own refinement and sustained development.

We believe that consideration by the General Assembly of the agenda item on a culture of peace is conducive to reinforcing a dialogue among civilizations, promoting the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and establishing a family of nations characterized by harmonious coexistence. In recent years, the relevance of the concept of a culture of peace has grown increasingly important, especially when considering the idea that it is necessary to avoid equating terrorism with any specific civilization or religion in the fight against terrorism.

The Chinese nation has always been peace-loving. Our ancient thinkers have left us with a great concept of "concord with difference" — that is, concord without monotony and difference without conflict. Observing and addressing issues from that perspective will not only help countries maintain friendly relations with their neighbours, but also facilitate the resolution of disputes in the international community.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that, by adopting the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Programme of Action of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, the international community is paying increasing attention to dialogue among different civilizations. The relevant United Nations and international organizations and their member States have used various means, including study visits, educational activities and scientific research, to help people of various countries acquire a better understanding of the cultures and religions of other people. All of that has greatly promoted the culture of peace.

The long process of history has left humanity with a rich cultural heritage. That heritage, unique to each nation, is the valuable property not only of individual nations and peoples, but also of all humankind. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the protection of cultural heritage. It has acceded to relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It has also set up a framework comprising its own system of laws in that regard, based on the law of the People's Republic of China on the protection of cultural relics.

The Government has designated the second Saturday of June of each year, as Cultural Heritage Day, with the aim of raising the awareness of the general public of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage, and to create a favourable atmosphere to encourage everyone to take part in such endeavours.

China will continue to participate actively in the activities of UNESCO in returning cultural property to their countries of origin, in seeking appropriate solutions in that regard and in contributing to international efforts towards the protection of cultural heritage.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank the UNESCO for the quality of its report (*see A/61/175*) and for the relevant information it contains. The holding of this debate is an opportunity for the international community to assess initiatives taken so far to promote a culture of peace and to develop forums for dialogue among civilizations and religions. It is also an opportunity to say to those who speak of the clash of civilizations that such a notion is a politically incorrect and philosophically dubious concept. That fact draws its essence and legitimacy from the early history of Morocco and its multifaceted roots as well as from our understanding of Islam. Thus we reach out to others while remaining ourselves and in order to enrich our society we engage in a dynamic exchange with others. Conflicts among societies often result from misunderstandings of one another and out of ignorance and lack of respect for the moral and societal values of others.

Based upon our profound convictions, the Kingdom of Morocco has firmly supported the

initiative for the Alliance of Civilizations initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. André Azoulay, Counselor to His Majesty the King, participated in this exercise, and in that manner my country supports the implementation of a project for a new world order based on relations between the Western Christian world and the Arab Muslim world — a society whose dimensions are ideological, political, institutional and cultural.

Throughout the past year, the world of the twenty-first century has been characterized by unbridled globalization. It has seen inter-ethnic and cultural tensions generated by defamatory and provocative actions in the name of the freedom of expression. Morocco condemns and has condemned those actions, based on the principle that the freedom of some cannot be exercised to the detriment of the sacred values of others. It is in that spirit that my country welcomes the efforts undertaken by UNESCO in that area, and supports the initiative to make dialogue an essential ingredient for bringing religions and civilizations closer together and in preventing conflicts.

It goes without saying that the dissemination of knowledge will to a great extent extend from the promotion of economic development and from strengthening human and institutional capacities. We are convinced that international cooperation and cultural exchanges among nations are important mechanisms for bringing peoples closer together. The same is true for education in the area of human rights and the inclusion of marginalized communities.

The Kingdom of Morocco has continued in that vein and includes in its educational system and its school programmes the promotion of human rights. It has opened up its audiovisual media and actively participates in international efforts aimed at bridging the digital divide. In addition, it has supported and contributed to the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal, to create a fund to assist developing countries to catch up in the area of information and communication technology. My country also hosts a number of training courses in various areas for foreign professionals, in particular those from sub-Saharan Africa.

Protecting cultural heritage and capacity-building, as well as increasing the awareness of cultural values, are effective means for peoples and

nations to preserve their identity and their traditions in a national and international environment imbued with peace, tolerance and mutual respect.

The international community must now do more in the area of education — to design curriculums, manuals and activities that will advocate cultural and religious tolerance, the peaceful settlements of conflicts and the promotion of human rights, bearing in mind the need to keep the citizen at the heart of those interests.

The international community is also invited to harmonize its efforts to make it possible for everyone to have access to information technology, which is now the prime means for disseminating and distributing knowledge. Faced with the challenge of ever-increasing ignorance of one another, the ever-narrowing sense of identity and the ideological void that we have, to our detriment, ignored for so long, we must be more open and foster a mingling of ideas of humanism and humanity, in the best tradition of our world.

We are called upon to carry out a tireless battle against ideological and moral degradation that occurred when the world was not watching and violence took over the landscape of politics and religion. My delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.11, as introduced by the Philippines and Pakistan. It meets the concerns of a number of delegations. My delegation therefore hopes that the draft will be adopted by consensus.

My delegation will also continue to place great importance on promoting a culture of peace and support any constructive and responsible initiative along those lines. It will also consider with interest draft resolution A/61/L.16, introduced this morning by the representative of Bangladesh, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010".

Mrs. Asmady (Indonesia): My delegation has always attached great importance to the promotion of a culture of peace. That is one of the important approaches that we are pursuing in order to deal with the persistent occurrence of prejudice, intolerance, misperceptions and xenophobia, which generate hatred, violence and disharmony within and among societies, as well as among peoples and nations throughout the world.

It is now widely recognized that the active promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, leading to universal respect for our diversity of beliefs, cultures and languages, is vital for the achievement of sustainable peace.

We thank the Director-General of UNESCO for his informative report on various activities carried out by the organization in this field, as contained in document A/61/175. Of particular importance to my delegation is UNESCO's programme to promote a culture of peace through education. We believe that that programme should be expanded in order to reach a wider target through the active involvement of various stakeholders, especially civil society.

It is worth recalling that both the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 United Nations World Summit affirmed shared values and principles such as freedom, equality, solidarity and tolerance as being essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. That is indeed a reaffirmation of the imperative of promoting a culture of peace to achieve sustainable peace at all levels in this increasingly globalized world.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It should be born in mind that, despite the proliferation of intercultural, intercivilizational and interfaith initiatives in recent times, the world is still beset by violence, hatred, discrimination, ignorance and poverty. We really need to step up our endeavours to meet the challenges ahead of us.

Our debate today is, in itself, a strong indication that we must all be prepared to work together to develop better ways to promote tolerance and respect for diversity and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. It is an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the promotion of dialogue on those important and sensitive issues, including the need for better implementation of all relevant provisions of the existing international instruments, as well as for exploration of further international measures to enhance the promotion of a culture of peace.

As a heterogeneous country itself, Indonesia is a firm believer in the merit of promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. Indonesia has been taking specific steps in the fields of education, culture, media, religion and society to promote the shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance.

We should support the role of the media in bridging gaps, developing better understanding among various religions, cultures and peoples, facilitating a policy of dialogue among societies and assisting in the creation of an environment conducive to the sharing of human experience, thereby contributing to the advancement of the culture of peace. We believe that, while the media can be a force for good, they can also — as demonstrated by the cartoon controversy — do a great deal of harm.

In that connection, Indonesia, in collaboration with Norway, held the first Global Inter-Media Dialogue last September in Bali, which was attended by leading mass media practitioners from five continents. The objective of the Inter-Media Dialogue was to increase the sensitivity of the mass media to other cultures and faiths without compromising freedom of expression.

Also of tremendous importance was the active involvement by informal community leaders in the Second International Conference of Islamic Scholars, held last June in Jakarta, which was attended by 300 scholars from more than 54 countries. The Conference produced a programme of action entitled "To Promote Islam as a Religion of Moderation and Tolerance". Indonesia also recently hosted the World Peace Forum, held in Jakarta from 14 to 16 August 2006, aimed at building dialogue and mutual cooperation among civilizations and promoting better understanding of human values. Furthermore, Indonesia has been actively promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region and within the Asia-Europe Meeting. That is our way of advancing the culture of peace within and among cultures, religions and civilizations.

In today's global multicultural environment, we should encourage dialogue at all levels of society, using it as an effective tool for promoting harmony and tolerance in interpersonal as well as inter-State relationships. Acknowledgement of global multiculturalism should also be reflected through respect for the sovereign integrity of all nations and the continued commitment of developed countries to provide assistance to developing countries.

Religion and culture are the core components of civilization. That implies that the promotion of dialogue among nations and societies must be seen as critical on the global agenda and as a factor contributing to the cultivation of a culture of peace.

We still have a long way to go towards the achievement of a culture of peace throughout the world. We should continue to explore various ways and means to advance such a culture. In that regard, we support the idea of declaring one of the coming years as the Year of Dialogue among Religions and Cultures, during which Governments, the United Nations system and civil society will be invited to undertake appropriate activities marking that event. We also support the idea of establishing a department within the Secretariat to deal with issues relating to the promotion of a culture of peace.

Mrs. Chabau Montaño (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 1945, through the Charter of the United Nations, we designed a new system of international relations to prevent a repetition of the terrible experiences of the two world wars, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to create a democratic and equitable international order based on respect for the dignity of all human beings.

Those were the objectives for which our Organization was established to maintain international peace and security. We also decided that the United Nations would base its actions on the principles of the sovereign equality of all its Members, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the non-use or threat of use of force and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. We also agreed that all peoples would achieve economic and social progress.

However, chaos continues to prevail in the world, despite attempts to convince us that conditions and rules now exist that will guarantee peace, order, well-being and security, which our planet needs so much.

A few countries that monopolize economic, technical and political power continue to uphold an international order that makes them ever richer and the majority of the countries ever poorer, exploited and dependent.

Six decades after the creation of the United Nations, the current economic and social situation threatens the very existence of humankind. Thus, today more than 1.1 billion people — one sixth of the world's population — survive on less than \$1 a day and more than 2.7 billion — almost half of the Earth's inhabitants — barely survive on less than \$2; 500 million infants live in extreme poverty; 1 million children under the age of five die annually from preventable diseases; more than 100 million children cannot attend school; and 850 million people suffer hunger.

Moreover, the survival of millions of persons and entire nations is threatened by the atmosphere of international insecurity caused by the aggressive policies and plans of the only super-Power of this unipolar world. Likewise, it is alarming that powerful countries seek to foment conflicts, appealing to interventionist concepts that contravene the Charter and that only aggravate the root causes of armed conflict, from generalized poverty to the desire to control strategic natural resources.

Notwithstanding the existence of that adverse landscape affecting the developing countries — and although the winds of reform are blowing in the United Nations, there is no intention of radically reforming this decadent institution so as to make it a body that truly represents the interests of all peoples of the world and not just a select few — it is indispensable to foster an atmosphere of international peace.

It is essential to uphold a culture of peace and non-violence that promotes dialogue between civilizations and the right of all peoples to self-determination and solidarity as a fundamental value, pursuant to which the world's problems should be addressed so that the responsibility to solve them may be shared and focused on helping those who need it most.

It must be firmly maintained that sovereignty cannot be sacrificed to an exploitative and unjust order in which a hegemonic super-Power, supported by its power and strength, can claim to decide it all. The main causes of the current conflicts are the poverty and underdevelopment that prevail in the overwhelming majority of countries, and the unequal distribution of the world's wealth and knowledge.

The current underdevelopment and poverty are the consequences of the conquest, colonization, enslavement and plundering of the territories of vast parts of the world by the former metropolises, the emergence of imperialism, and the bloody wars to divvy up the world anew. Today, those perennial Powers have the moral obligation to indemnify our countries for the damage that they inflicted on us over centuries.

None of that which exists in the economic and political order serves the interests of humanity. That order, which marginalizes and excludes 80 per cent of the world's population, cannot be sustained. We believe that the main objective of the United Nations is to save the world not only from war, but also from

underdevelopment, hunger, disease, poverty and the destruction of natural resources that are essential to human existence. And we should do it soon, before it is too late.

Cuba reiterates its adherence to multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, pursuant to the United Nations Charter and international law, as the only acceptable way to address international problems. Only thus will there be peace and development for all.

Our contribution to that undertaking is based on a comprehensive international cooperation programme, which is selflessly implemented in the areas of sport, health and education by thousands of Cuban specialists and technicians who provide support services in many countries. They do all that despite the tight economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States, against which most Members of the United Nations will again declare themselves on Wednesday, 8 November.

The dream of achieving truly just and rational norms that govern human destinies seems impossible to many. We are convinced that the struggle for the impossible should therefore be a goal that the Organization sets for itself. We have to sow ideas, eradicate selfishness and foster solidarity and genuine international cooperation. Once we do so, there will be no need for all the weapons created by this civilization.

The Acting President: I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): The maintenance, defence and promotion of peace in the world are at the summit of the functions and priorities of the United Nations. Through conviction and many years' experience, the Organization believes that peace is first and foremost a culture, prior to being a network of peaceful relations among nations, anchored in the system of rules and mechanisms of international law.

Throughout the years of United Nations activity, the Holy See has expressed confidence in this institution as a privileged forum in which nations can work in concert for the promotion of peace, and has offered its own contribution in reading the signs of the times, deepening reflection, and above all rallying entire communities throughout the world to foster and maintain a culture of peace.

At the start of this year, Pope Benedict XVI addressed all women and men of goodwill with a

message entitled "In Truth, Peace". Reading the signs of our times — in which terrorism, nihilism and fanatical fundamentalism threaten peaceful coexistence — the Pope underlined the inseparable bond between peace and truth.

Peace implies a truth that is common to all peoples beyond cultural, philosophical and religious diversities. It is the idea of the dignity of every human person intimately linked to the transcendent. Thus peace will be reached once it is understood and put into practice as the realization of this shared truth, in mutual respect for cultural diversities.

An extreme exaltation of differences clashes with this fundamental truth. We need to regain the awareness that we share a common destiny that is ultimately transcendent so as to maximize our historical and cultural differences, not in opposition to, but in cooperation with, people belonging to other cultures. To this end, we need to affirm our common commitment to promoting institutions and methods of joint action and cooperation between peoples and nations, and especially to fostering education for peace, at a level well above the necessary and hoped-for structural reforms.

In this context, my delegation would like to renew its support for the ongoing International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. We all have a great responsibility for the formation of future generations. That is why the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue will convene a meeting in Assisi tomorrow for young people from different countries and cultural and religious backgrounds, engaging them in a personal commitment to dialogue, prayer and education on tolerance and peace.

The lack of the basic truth of peace at the cultural level has undoubtedly produced devastating effects down through the years, and there are still cultures and mentalities that even today deny it exists. The most dramatic example of this is international terrorism. The criminal designs of international terrorism rest on false cultural roots that deny the existence of a link between truth and human life. Such roots are identifiable in nihilism and in fanatical fundamentalism, which are erroneous ways of relating to truth. The nihilist denies the very existence of truth, while the fundamentalist claims to be able to impose it by force. Despite their different origins and cultural backgrounds, both show a

dangerous contempt for human beings and human life, and ultimately for God himself.

The causes of lack of peace in our world cannot be reduced to those of an exclusively social or political nature. Terrorism, war, genocide and national and international injustice that discriminate, oppress and abandon entire populations to hunger and helplessness, or hinder or threaten the right to existence of nations, can also be explained by deeper motivations of a cultural, ideological, philosophical and even religious nature. Social behaviour and political choices usually follow. At this level, it is essential to formulate both national and international peace policies that will embrace the truth of peace and shun lies as a system for relations or governance.

With the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, this Organization adopted the principle of the responsibility to protect as a practical translation of the exercise of sovereignty and of governance. The responsibility to protect presupposes the capacity and the will to remove threats, to establish relations and mechanisms apt to continue to dissuade humanity from resolving their disputes through the use of force and, to the extent possible, to substitute law for force.

The responsibility to protect is intimately linked with and directly proportional to respect for the truth of peace, whether it is a question of deciding to use force in extreme cases, the conduct during and after conflict, military expenditure, the arms trade, disarmament and nuclear proliferation, demographics or the approach to development. To realize peace at the social and political levels, the correct relation between truth and peace at the cultural level needs to be re-established.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call upon the Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Mr. Schulz (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is taking the floor under this item because of the importance it attaches to a much stronger effort by Governments, international organizations and civil society on this subject.

We are now past the mid-point of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The atmosphere that greeted the

adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/15 in 1997 is by now probably a distant memory for many organizations and Governments, but the need for concerted action has probably never been greater.

This is a message we receive unequivocally from our worldwide membership of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It is a message they give to us as we prepare for the Thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will be held in Geneva in late November 2007.

The IFRC's member Societies are looking to us, as their representative in the international community, to bring information about what the major actors are doing, not just what they are saying, to promote tolerance and respect for diversity. These are essential actions if the world is truly to combat discrimination and prejudice. They are essential actions in a world that is witnessing a surge in community prejudice.

There are many examples of our work and that of national Societies. To give a few examples, the British Red Cross has worked with the Bangladesh Red Crescent to bridge gaps and bring support to people living in vulnerability in the United Kingdom. Early outreach work has developed into other actions for first aid and community health assistance. A programme of volunteer recruitment has provided much-needed resources capable of making a difference for the community. Similar work, concentrating on volunteer recruitment, has also been reported by other Red Cross Societies, including those of Denmark, Germany and Sweden. In Iceland, the Government and the Icelandic Red Cross have joined forces in training Icelandic volunteer peacebuilders in preparation for their peace missions.

I mention these actions not just for the record, but to emphasize our belief that action must take place with the full involvement of the communities themselves. This is essential in all countries, but it is of special importance in countries where migration has brought together people of different cultures, ethnicities, traditions and beliefs. The issue of migration and integration has been a key subject in the work of some of our partner international organizations, and we pay tribute to the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the work they have done to broaden understanding of the problems and the need for solutions.

We know that the IFRC has a role to play as a network bringing together all the world's cultures under one set of fundamental principles. In this context, we underline the important role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we see a range of opportunities in this field in the future, linking our national Societies to national human rights institutions.

We are working now with our bridging role — bridging Governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at high levels, and bridging communities and local authorities where grassroots contact is the key. We use our membership of the "big six" — the six main international youth organizations — to emphasize the role of youth in finding and implementing solutions, and we emphasize worldwide the need for youth to work with the fundamental principles of the movement to promote tolerance and respect for diversity as they prepare to lead the countries of the world in the future.

Our support for the Secretary-General's initiative, the Alliance of Civilizations, was demonstrated through the participation of our Deputy Secretary-General in the hearings organized by the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations in July 2006 in Geneva. At the hearings, he recalled the pledge delivered by the IFRC in 2003 at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The pledge contains the vow of the IFRC, which is important to this debate, in two respects: to develop public dialogue and advocacy, promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for diversity at the national and international level; and to develop partnerships, promote dialogue and support programmes in this area with Governments and international and national organizations working towards the same goals, particularly in view of the importance of the role played by young people in peer and non-formal education to promote international friendship and understanding.

We also spoke of the need to intensify community participation in such programme, highlighting, in particular, the importance of an enabling volunteer environment through which such programmes can flourish at the community level and through which a real impact can be made on the stigmatization and exclusion which so many marginalized people face in our times.

Against this background, I give the Assembly our commitment to maintain a high profile on these issues. We will consult thoroughly and widely as we prepare for the 2007 International Conference in Geneva, which will bring together the world's Governments and our national society leaders. We look forward to a strong and positive outcome from this debate, with commitments from all to make this world a better place to live.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/61/L.11 will be taken at a later date. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44

Agenda item 49

Sport for peace and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/373)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.12)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the representative of Tunisia to introduce the draft resolution A/61/L.12.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Secretary-General on his report entitled "Sport for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373) and to tell him how much my delegation appreciates the work done by Mr. Adolf Ogi, former President of Switzerland, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as for his tireless efforts to ensure the success of programmes aimed at promoting sport worldwide. I also wish to thank his representative, Mr. Djibril Diallo, Director of the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, for his commitment to the cause of sport and for his valuable contribution in this area.

I wish to reiterate the determination of Tunisia to pursue its efforts to make sport, which is so necessary for healthy body and mind, the link and common denominator among Member States whose commitment to peace, the essential objective of our Organization, is widely shared. I also wish to express our satisfaction at the interest and enthusiasm generated during the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, which was celebrated by the holding of events

worldwide, thus underscoring the importance of sport for the participants and their commitment to the universal character of this activity.

In the framework of the Year, Tunisia organized the International Conference on Sport and Health, which culminated in the Hammamet Declaration in which participant States reiterated the importance of sport and physical education for a lifestyle that is physically and mentally healthy. Given the noble character of sport and its vital contribution in the rise of future generations who seek out good physical and mental fitness, Tunisia welcomes the unanimous adoption at the thirty-third session of the UNESCO General Conference of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, the first global instrument to combat this dangerous scourge. Tunisia takes this opportunity to invite Member States to take all necessary measures to address this danger which undermines both the health of athletes and the image and credibility of sporting events which honour mankind, such as the Olympic Games.

In order to keep enthusiasm high and to make sport a means of promoting universal principles for future generations, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace", on behalf of the sponsors whose names appear in that document.

Since the publication of that document, the following Member States have become sponsors: Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Suriname, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zambia.

This draft resolution is the fruit of broad consultations, both with a great number of Member

States as well as with United Nations institutions. I wish to thank them sincerely for their interest in this text and for the active role they played in the success of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. The draft resolution encourages all participants in the field of sport to set up awareness programmes for peace worldwide by organizing sporting events and by mainstreaming sport in their development programmes, drawing on the Action Plan contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

The draft resolution also invites Member States to set up sport programmes to further promote the international community's interest in important subjects such as gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also takes note with appreciation of the organization by the United Nations on 29-31 October 2006 of the first Global Youth Leadership Summit, which highlighted the importance of sport in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Solidarity among peoples at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not only a choice but a necessity which we are convinced can be solidified through sport. For this reason, the delegation of my country as well as the delegations of other sponsoring countries hope that this draft resolution will be supported by all Member States; this will send a strong message to all those men and women who promote the noble practice of sport and will constitute a major encouragement for athletes.

Ms. Alzaabi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his recent report and for the valuable information contained therein, with which we expect to enrich our deliberations on this item.

The observance of the Olympic Truce, which was started by the General Assembly in the last decade, and the unanimity of heads of State and Government at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly on the importance of developing sport for peace and development, reflect the determination of the international community to harness that type of human activity to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Events have demonstrated that the interest of Governments and civil societies in developing sport and physical education can significantly contribute to

strengthening their national development programmes, particularly in the areas of improving public health among citizens, bringing local communities together, promoting respect for law among individuals, maintaining the safety of public facilities and environment, and enhancing coherence and diversity among individuals and communities. At the global level, international athletic events have contributed to strengthening international respect for the traditions and cultures of peoples and brought them closer together by enhancing the spirit of cooperation, tolerance, harmony and love among them.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to ensure the success of the International Year for Sport and Physical Education 2005 and its other initiatives for cooperation and partnership with the International Olympic Committee and other organizations, including the establishment of institutional arrangements and funds and the organization of conferences and national seminars, as referred to in the recent report of the Secretary-General. All such activities seek to improve the quality of sporting events, to create an environment conducive to the achievement of various development plans, and to improve the quality of educational, cultural and health-related services for all.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of expanding such initiatives to include in particular the extension of financial, economic and moral assistance to developing countries, especially the smallest and poorest, that are affected by wars and conflicts in order to enable them to meet their local needs, eliminate hotspots of poverty, violence and dissension in their societies, rebuild the infrastructure of their sport institutions, and promote sport among their youth, who will thus be able to share their athletic experiences and actively participate in regional and Olympic games.

In that context, we also stress the importance of reaching an international consensus on a code of good practice for sport and for developing strategic partnership programmes for all stakeholders and sport-related organizations, including sport associations and the private sector. That will contribute to disseminating ethics of human conduct and the principles of the United Nations Charter and to supporting joint efforts to enhance the social integration of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and the elderly. Moreover, partnership programmes will also help to

support natural disaster response programmes and to combat violence, terrorism, crime, deviance, the illicit trade in drugs and many other vices.

Convinced that young people are its true national wealth, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has given special attention to the sport sector and its young men and women by incorporating physical education into the primary educational system. It has also supported the student scout movement with a view to developing the mental, physical and moral skills of students and instilling in them the values and principles necessary for improving their integration into local communities and their participation in environmental protection and awareness programmes, especially those related to humanitarian, social and health-related activities and local and national development.

Given its determination to sharpen and develop the skills and capacities of its young people throughout their years of primary education in order to enable them to effectively participate in national development plans at all levels, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has sought to institutionalize the sport sector. It has allocated substantial budgetary resources to financing sport development activities and youth programmes and incorporated them into its national social, environmental and health development programmes. It has also established various associations for sponsoring sport activities, including the General Authority for Youth and Sport, the Sport Federations Council and the National Olympic Committee, which all participate in developing and implementing a strategy to promote and sponsor national sport activities and to develop training, refereeing and fair competition among athletes.

The strategy also aims at supporting national clubs and unions and their teams. It has increased the number of sport clubs established in accordance with the latest international standards and regulations. These have contributed significantly in the past two decades to promoting sport among young people of both sexes, especially those with special needs, and enhanced their active participation in many of the national, regional and international competitive sports, including the Olympic Games. This has resulted in some of our national clubs and athletes winning distinguished medals and championships. In the interest of safeguarding the health of its athletes, the United Arab Emirates has also signed the Copenhagen Declaration on Anti-Doping in Sport.

The United Arab Emirates, which believes that the Olympic Truce can be an effective tool for ending wars and conflicts, urges the United Nations and relevant regional organizations to step up their joint efforts to revive that tradition and to utilize sport activities and competitions organized during conflicts to stabilize ceasefires, and to encourage belligerents to consider other ways of addressing their conflicts and to use dialogue and peaceful means for resolving their conflicts instead of resorting to war and destruction.

In that context, we also affirm the importance of enhancing other international initiatives aimed at promoting the concept of sport for all and at incorporating its noble values into educational and development strategies and programmes in order to enhance interaction and dialogue among different cultures and civilizations, promote mutual interests among peoples, and advance peacebuilding efforts. We also look forward to reaching international consensus on an anti-doping convention to prevent the abuse of drugs in all sport activities and to develop sport for young people in a healthy and sound environment that promotes their involvement in achieving the goals of security, peace and development in their communities.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland): My delegation has taken note with great satisfaction of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Sport for development and peace: the way forward", which he has submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are also pleased that we are debating the report together with draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace".

We are particularly pleased today with the outstanding publication on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, which has just been released, and which I can show to members in its beautiful United Nations blue cover. I am fully aware how sensitive an issue it is these days to promote a book from this rostrum. This book may not have the philosophical depth of a work by Noam Chomsky, but it is an impressive testimony to the great number and variety of initiatives, activities and networks aimed at making a difference through sport and play. It illustrates the efforts of the United Nations system, Governments, sport organizations and development agencies, as well as the private sector, to harness the great positive potential of sport and physical education to specifically and systematically promote development, education, peace and health.

None of that would not have been possible without the outstanding commitment of the Secretary-General himself and of his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace and his teams in Geneva and New York. Switzerland congratulates them and thanks them for their untiring efforts.

Recalling our main contribution to the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, we should like to highlight once again the importance of the second Magglingen Conference on Sport and Development, convened in December 2005 at the initiative of the Special Adviser. The Conference marked the culmination and conclusion of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005. It brought together more than 400 participants from 70 countries and all sectors of society.

The Conference represented a milestone on the path towards a worldwide partnership of sport and development. Its outcome document, the Magglingen Call to Action, was adopted unanimously by all participants. It is an action-oriented document targeted to everyone: sports organizations, athletes, Governments, development agencies, the private sector, the media, research institutions and armed forces. It calls upon all of them to use and promote sport for development and peace in their respective fields. For example, it calls upon multilateral organizations and the United Nations system to take a lead role in policy dialogue at the strategic and global levels, to raise the awareness of international actors and other partners, to strengthen networks and enhance coordination, and to promote the implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes.

Both the publication of the Special Adviser and the Magglingen Conference and its outcome show clearly that a solid foundation has been laid over the past few years, in particular 2005.

Today, it is up to all stakeholders not only to agree to a common vision, common aims and common areas for action for the future, but also, and even more important, to maintain the momentum for the further implementation of sport as an instrument to contribute to the attainment of development objectives, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In that regard, the main challenges ahead are taken up in the draft resolution before us today, which we fully support.

The time is ripe to continue investing in implementation. That means that agencies, funds and

programmes are called upon to systematically integrate and mainstream sport as an instrument in their own operational work — to translate the conceptual basis into action. While we understand the concern to increase the focus and prioritize the work of funds and programmes, we are deeply convinced that sport is not a distraction from that focus, but a formidable vehicle for achieving the MDGs.

The momentum so far, as well as the needs and challenges ahead, strengthen our conviction that it is time to significantly step up our efforts and activities. Further efforts are needed to enable the enormous potential of sport for development and peace to become a lasting reality.

We appeal to the United Nations family to join forces in order to establish a coherent and effective mechanism in that regard. The Special Adviser's role of providing guidance on the institutional future of sport for development and peace within the United Nations system is instrumental.

Today's debate is about sport for development and peace. Switzerland, however, is convinced that it is about much more. In our view, it is about the profile of the United Nations. Our engagement within the Organization is focused on intensifying its outreach, whether to civil society, to the private sector, to the scientific community or to the world of sport. The future of the United Nations lies in its partnerships with civil society at large. In that regard, sport is an ideal vehicle for bringing outreach and partnerships to life.

The draft resolution on the agenda of today's debate embodies that spirit. Switzerland fully supports its adoption.

Mr. Al-Henzab (Qatar) (spoke in Arabic): It gives me great pleasure to address the members of the General Assembly on this important item. I should also like to commend the United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace for promoting the concept of sport for development and peace throughout the world.

Increasingly, the topic of sport for development and peace is being accorded recognition and importance at the global level. The observance of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 reflected international recognition of the organic relationship between sport and peace and development, a relationship that was highlighted in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

The State of Qatar subscribes to the notion that human beings are at the core of development. We attach great importance to the promotion of social justice and the safeguarding of values and practices that ensure social cohesion. We seek to create a favourable environment for women, girls, young people and other social groups not only by providing primary education and basic health care to all citizens, but also by basing our development agenda on the development of human resources and respect for human rights.

From the outset, the State of Qatar has supported United Nations activities to promote sport for development and peace. At the national level, we have taken concrete steps to develop and implement sustainable sport and physical education programmes and policies. The advocacy, care and vision of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Nasser Abdullah Al Misnad, Consort of the Emir, have resulted in a host of successful initiatives to enhance understanding among countries and societies.

Indeed, the leaders of the State of Qatar regard sport as a direct, rewarding and important investment in Qatari children and young people that enables them to increase their productivity and enhance their sense of single community and common vision. The State of Qatar has launched a variety of initiatives such as the promotion of women's sport and the enhancement of physical education departments within our national educational system.

At the global level, the State of Qatar, although small in size, has made great strides in playing a pivotal role in the promotion of international peace and cooperation. An important example is our hosting of the fifteenth Asian Games at Doha, Qatar, in December 2006, which will help to bridge cultural divides, unite communities and help build leadership capacities and values within the sport world in the Asia-Pacific region.

The State of Qatar views sport and physical education as a catalyst for development and recognizes their multifaceted benefits, in particular for socioeconomic development, for inculcating human values in the hearts and minds of citizens, and for promoting peace, international understanding and tolerance.

The role of sport in peace and development is a priority for all nations. Sport is a vehicle that

transcends differences and that teaches skills and values for a lifetime. It helps develop a sense of community and common purpose. Sport promotes integration, teamwork and tolerance. It strengthens bonds of friendship among young people. The peace we seek throughout every region of the world is not simply the absence of armed conflict or hostility; it is a web of unity among nations woven from the strands of interdependence, cooperation and creative thought. Sport is, in large measure, a vehicle for peacebuilding, fostering social cohesion and the unity of mankind.

The international community needs to harness the power of sport for peace and development. Greater attention should be given to the following issues. First, sport and physical education should evolve from a marginal sector to a priority development sector and should be viewed as a catalyst for socio-economic development. Secondly, sport must be viewed as a human right that overcomes barriers of race, religion, gender, disability and social background. Thirdly, sport should be better integrated into government development policies and United Nations development programmes. Fourthly, more thought must be given to using sport as a means to promote intercultural dialogue, in particular during post-conflict and peacebuilding phases. Fifthly, there is a need for partnership between national Olympic committees and the United Nations system to improve the allocation of resources and to optimize their use. Were we to implement those and other measures, we would succeed in making sport an essential component of development.

I would like finally to thank the friendly delegation of Tunisia for introducing draft resolution A/61/L.12, which the State of Qatar fully supports.

Mr. Sayeed (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Sport for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373). We note that the report reviews the achievements of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, including the broad range of activities and initiatives carried out worldwide by Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders for continuing the momentum generated by the International Year.

Activities relating to sports and physical education are necessary components of human resource development. They have a positive impact on the overall personality of youth through the promotion of

good health, comradeship and a spirit of friendly competition. Apart from providing beneficial recreation, sports also improve productivity and foster social harmony and discipline.

India believes in the key role of sports in national life. Given the importance of sports and games, the Government of India has taken several initiatives to improve the standard of sports in the country. In the modern world, the complexion of sports has undergone a transformation due to the use of modern equipment and the introduction of modern infrastructure and highly sophisticated equipment. The high degree of competitiveness in international sports has led to the nurturing of talent from a tender age and to greater emphasis on hard physical training along scientific lines.

Despite resource constraints, India has been making efforts for broad-basing sports and for the provision of modern sports infrastructure. The Government has focused its attention on the need for upgrading the skills of the coaching fraternity and for the provision of adequate sports-science backup. The Government has encouraged the national sports federations to function more efficiently and is also encouraging the active involvement of business and industry in the promotion of sports. The Government of India formulated a new national sports policy in 2001, keeping those objectives in view.

India has a long tradition of sports and physical fitness. In keeping with that tradition, the Government of India has instituted several sports awards to encourage achievements by sportspersons. The Government is also encouraging international cooperation in the field of sports and physical education and has been providing financial assistance to recognized national sports federations.

The Sports Authority of India was established by the Government in 1984 to achieve the twin objectives of the broad-basing of sport and nurturing talent in children of various age groups by providing them with the necessary infrastructure, equipment, coaching and other facilities. The Sports Authority is implementing a number of sports promotion schemes. Under one of its schemes, it established a sports medicine centre, which is operational full-time. The Sports Authority also maintains a dope control centre.

The Government of India has been promoting sports through several schemes that provide incentives

to encourage sports activities. The Sports Fund for Pensions for Meritorious Sportspersons was launched in 1994 and is providing pensions to about 375 sportspersons. A scheme for the promotion of sports and games in schools was introduced in 1986 to raise the standard of sports at the school level and to encourage participation in inter-school competitions.

To broad-base games and sports in rural areas, the Government launched the Rural Sports Programme in 1970-71. Under that scheme, tournaments are also organized for indigenous sports that are popular in different parts of the country. The Sports Scholarship Scheme was launched in 1970-71 to assist talented boys and girls in receiving a nutritious diet, sports equipment and other support and to pursue sports as a career option. The National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons was set up in 1982 to assist outstanding retired sportspersons. Under this scheme, pension and grants are provided to eminent sportspersons as well as their families. A National Sports Development Fund has been instituted to mobilize resources for Government and non-governmental sources, including the private and corporate sectors.

We have taken note of the various activities organized by the United Nations system to help build on the momentum of the International Year. We encourage the United Nations system to undertake activities for sport for development and peace and to develop indicators and benchmarks for evaluating and monitoring those activities. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is national Governments that are responsible for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's suggestions to Member States for maximizing the positive impact of sports and realizing the full potential of that powerful tool. India recognizes the positive value of sport as an instrument that can bring people together in a neutral and apolitical setting. In our neighbourhood, the game of cricket has sometimes served as an instrument of diplomacy, adding a new phrase to our lexicon, namely, cricket diplomacy.

India believes that sports activity is integral to the all-around development of the human personality. We have, therefore, remained engaged with the efforts of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, including his efforts to organize the United Nations Global Youth Leadership

Summit. We are convinced that the engagement of youth will help energize the efforts of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We support efforts by the United Nations system to generate awareness among the youth through such initiatives.

Mr. Salih (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the President and to the Bureau, for their approach to guiding the work of the General Assembly. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General and the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group for their valuable efforts.

My delegation sponsored last year's General Assembly resolution 60/9, on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005. This year, my delegation will also join in sponsoring draft resolution A/61/L.12, on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. My delegation also welcomes the Global Youth Leadership Summit organized by the United Nations in October 2006.

Because my Government understands the vital importance of sport and youth and the increasing role of this sector in capacity-building, development and promoting a culture of peace, we have established a new ministry for sport, youth and culture within the Government of National Unity, which establishes and supervises strategies and policies concerning those issues, and links them to legislation. That legislation is integrated with sport and youth institutions whose members are democratically elected through national and local sports unions and clubs and our national Olympic committee.

In its efforts to strengthen the important sport sector, my country has expanded its range of possibilities both horizontally and vertically by establishing physical education and sport programmes in institutes and universities, in order to graduate students qualified in many aspects of sport, who will then work in secondary schools, clubs and youth centres in villages, communities and towns. There is no doubt that that will be a positive development for sports projects; it will train qualified sport professionals.

In February 1957, at Khartoum, my country was honoured to contribute to the establishment of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), along with Egypt and Ethiopia. CAF is one of several African

entities that was established even before the Organization of African Unity in 1963. In February 2007, we will commemorate the golden anniversary of the establishment of CAF. The celebration will be held in the capital of my country, underscoring my country's support for the sport and cultural aspects of CAF. History will recognize the Confederation as having led the first regional and international effort to isolate and punish the apartheid regime of South Africa: South Africa was prohibited from attending on participating in the first African Cup of Nations, held in Khartoum in 1957.

My country has hosted regional sports competitions for countries of East and Central Africa on many occasions, because we believe in the importance of interaction among young people of the continent for increased communication and peace for all. Through our Olympic committee and our national sports associations, sport has played an important role in raising our awareness and in promoting development projects in the areas of education, health, awareness of the danger of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, polio vaccination campaigns, the fight against malaria, awareness of the dangers of drugs and the use of steroids and stimulants, and environmental protection programmes.

Some of my country's most famous athletes participate in charitable causes. They include the runner Omar Khalifa, who is known worldwide for activities such as travelling from continent to continent for Sport Aid to help the victims of famine, desertification and drought in Africa; the swimmers Sultan Kayyah and Sariya Gadalla; and the football stars Haytham Mustafa and Faisal al-Ajam of the Al-Hilal and Al-Mirrikh clubs have participated in charity and social programmes, particularly for the children of my country and for the population and the children of Palestine, through playing for the Arab team which played a number of games two years ago, and serving as goodwill ambassadors for SOS Children's Villages. All of that has had a good impact. The national Sudanese teams and clubs have had the honour of strengthening relations with other Arab and African countries through formal and friendly competitions.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement has doubled the responsibility of sport in its role in promoting development, peace and unity in the Sudan through strengthening those concepts and linking them

with the reality of life among young people, children and women. Sports clubs in the Sudan, in particular the Al-Hilal and the Al-Mirrikh clubs, form a melting pot of unity among the provinces of the Sudan. We are a country of diverse religions, creeds, cultures and ethnicities, and sport is a pot in which all of the components of Sudanese society are mixed and unified. Sport makes an important contribution to providing support and assistance for areas of conflict in the south, in Darfur and in the camps for refugees and displaced persons. Sport has also helped to bolster education and health projects.

Given the importance of sport for peace and development, my country hopes for unified support from the international community. The Sudan looks forward to the cooperation of Member States, the United Nations and sport-related organizations, in working in coordination with my country to mobilize efforts in the area of sports and youth through the provision of financial, technical and logistical resources for capacity-building and for preparing qualified people as administrators in our Olympic committee and in national clubs and teams. We need assistance in training coaches and referees and in sponsoring talented athletes in all sports, as well as equipment and infrastructure such as playing fields and centres for youth and students in schools and universities. We must improve efficiency and increase the job placement of physical education graduates in order to build a solid base for young people and for generations to come.

In particular, we would like to note the importance of providing the necessary support for capacity-building programmes for sports specialists and journalists, as they are an important sector in the sports social and cultural system. This could be done through their elected association for sportswriters. Some prominent initiatives of many sports journals in the Sudan are undertaken in the area of supporting poor families, dealing with incurable diseases and sponsoring orphans. In addition, they play an important, responsible and pioneering role in disseminating good values, good conduct and serving higher interests, spreading the culture of peace and combating bad habits. All of this will have a positive impact in promoting the role of sports as a means of enhancing and spreading the values of peace and development and highlighting the values of right, goodness and tolerance in a country emerging from

conflict and war into an oasis of understanding, love and advancement through sports.

The delegation of Sudan would like to submit a proposal to the General Assembly through which the United Nations could sponsor a sports initiative in cooperation with FIFA, the International Olympic Committee and the African Union for Soccer in order to rebuild and rehabilitate the infrastructures of countries emerging from conflict and war, in Africa in general and in my country in particular.

Mr. Chabar (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report entitled "Sports for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373). We welcome the relevant information contained in that report, in particular the Action Plan, which provides a road map for the next three years to strengthen partnerships through sports as a means of promoting programmes for development and peace.

It is important to highlight the fact that sports and physical education are important means for promoting tolerance and a culture of peace and for bringing peoples closer together. The Kingdom of Morocco therefore supports the activities of the United Nations Offices of Sport for Development and Peace in Geneva and in New York and invites Member States to make necessary resources available to those offices so that they can carry out their mandates appropriately.

For several years now, the Kingdom of Morocco has included sport in its educational and school systems and has used this discipline as a means of combating poverty and exclusion. It played an active part in the holding of the International Year for Sport and Physical Education 2005 and set up a national coordination centre for this purpose. The active involvement of the Kingdom of Morocco in this area stems from its profound conviction that sport has become a powerful partner for development, because of the important role it can play in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and because it is a factor for bringing about an era of lasting peace. Morocco has decreed sport for all as one of its national priorities.

My delegation therefore believes that we must keep up the pace set by the International Year and the Action Plan and encourage the United Nations and other partners to move on from awareness activities to the implementation of a number of activities on a

broader scale. This can be achieved by strengthening cooperation and coordination among Member States to promote a common understanding of the role of sport in the service of development and peace.

We must also set up an information network and define priorities to promote sports as a model and draft sports policies to ensure everyone's participation. It is important to increase sporting activities and to integrate them in physical education, as well as in public health policies and other relevant policies. My delegation supports the activities of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and hopes that his mandate will be maintained.

The Kingdom of Morocco is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.12 and hopes to see it adopted by consensus.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report (A/61/373) submitted under this agenda item. The report reviews the achievements of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, puts forward the United Nations Action Plan on sport for development and peace and pointed the way forward for the future efforts of the United Nations and its Member States in the field of sports.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's proposal in the report to integrate sport into the development agenda and the programmes for health, education, development and peace, and to use it as a tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We agree that "sport for all" should constitute a basis for systematic efforts to use sports to promote development and peace. We believe that more attention and resources should be devoted to the cause of sport for development and peace.

China has a huge population and pays great attention to sports. A mutually reinforcing relationship has developed between sport and development in China. The past five years witnessed enormous achievements in China's economic and social development, and also the rapid development of sports. The year 2006 marks the eleventh anniversary of the launch of the Outline of the National Plan on Sport and Fitness for All. Today, awareness of the benefits of sports is rising among the Chinese people, resulting in increasing participation in sports and fitness activities. Sport for all at the grass-roots level has turned a brand new page in its development.

As the host of the 2008 Olympic Games, China's preparations for the Games are now in full swing. For the next five years, China's overall objective in the field of sports will be to use the opportunity of hosting and participating in the 2008 Olympics as a spur to the nation-wide efforts to implement sport for all, achieve preliminary results in creating a national system of sport and fitness with Chinese characteristics and realize the integrated, coordinated and sustainable development of sports.

In 2007, the twelfth Special Summer Olympic Games will be held in Shanghai. This is the first time for the Special Summer Olympic Games to make its way into a developing country. This will surely further enhance the development of various activities related to the Special Olympics and promote China's efforts in safeguarding the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. In order to present the Shanghai Special Olympics to the world, the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations, in concert with the Municipal Government of Shanghai, the International Committee for Special Olympic Games, the Preparatory Committee of the Special Olympic Games in Shanghai and the United Nations New York Sport Office, will organize a thematic forum, reception and photo exhibition next Friday, 10 November. We look forward to the active participation of all delegations and representatives of the Secretariat.

As pointed out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), sport can foster peace and development and contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The Chinese delegation wishes to reiterate on this occasion that we are ready to join other Member States in working for the cause of sport for development and peace. We will integrate it into our vision of building a harmonious society and, working on that basis, contribute to our joint efforts for international peace, development and prosperity.

Ms. Picco (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his report in which he presented the United Nations Plan of Action on Sport for Development and Peace (A/61/373) that we will be endorsing at the end of our meeting. We would also like to congratulate the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General and the members of the Office of Sport for Development and Peace for the work that they have carried out and, specifically, for the success of the Global Youth Leadership Summit which has just concluded in New York.

Any initiative which seeks to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be welcomed. Sport, as a vector for development and peace, transcends generations, cultures and beliefs.

On the initiative of its Princess, and in particular His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, who is a member of the International Olympic Committee and an accomplished athlete who has participated at five Olympic Games, the Principality of Monaco has always promoted sports as an instrument for peace, for example, through the Olympic truce.

We therefore welcome, with great satisfaction, the due recognition of the role of physical education and sport in promoting the basic values and principles of solidarity, tolerance, a culture of peace, gender equality, the recognition of special needs of the handicapped and the intercultural dialogue, values also continue in the Charter of our Organization. Sport, like culture, is an extraordinary means for human beings to communicate. We believe that sport is one of the necessary elements for a true alliance of civilizations.

In addition, the participation of world-renowned champions who are admired by all as goodwill ambassadors is an exceptional tool because they can, better than anyone, transmit the ideals of the United Nations to youth and promote the MDGs.

The Principality of Monaco organizes many world-renowned sports events. During these competitions, athletes participate in competitions to benefit local non-governmental organizations that work in the field of development. At the initiative of the Economic Youth Chamber of Monaco, a week-long relay race has been organized for many years. This race, known as "No Finish Line", promotes children's rights and is supported by several generations of participants.

Both adults and children are united in their effort to defend a just cause while carrying out a healthy activity. In the preparation of this race, children and their teachers are encouraged to think about the reasons behind the need for the race beyond their family environment.

Every year, the Principality also organizes the Special Olympics Monaco, in which 52 handicapped athletes in 8 European teams inspire spectators' admiration. In October 2007, our Special Olympics delegation will participate in the Special Olympic Games in Shanghai.

In 2007, Monaco will host the Games of the Small States of Europe, an event created in 1984, which welcomes athletes from eight small European States in the best competitive spirit. We hope that this event, which receives the sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee, will allow us to demonstrate the role of sport for peace and development.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to stress our support for the draft resolution entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (A/61/L.12). Chile has been very enthusiastic in supporting the consensus at this General Assembly because we are convinced that sport is an effective vehicle to promote not just peace and development, but also to contribute to creating an environment of tolerance and dialogue which are so necessary in the world today.

We would therefore like to congratulate Tunisia on its work in putting forward this new draft resolution. Here, we would like to stress our interest in the Plan of Action put forward by the Secretary-General in his report "Sport for Development and peace: the way forward" (A/61/343), which we consider an excellent tool for guidance over the next three years which will allow us not just to bring together the efforts of Governments, civil society and multilateral organizations, but also to expand and strengthen plans and programmes that are being implemented in these fields within each of our countries.

The Plan of Action should also help us to promote a world culture of sport among young people, adults and the elderly, including, of course, handicapped athletes — men, women and children, inhabitants of developed and developing countries — so as to improve their quality of life and contribute to a less violent, healthier and more tolerant world. We think we need fewer bullets and more balls to use for sports, less conflict and more sports cooperation for peace and development.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the role of Mr. Adolph Ogi, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as Mr. Djibril Diallo, Director of the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

I would also like to recall that, from the beginning, Chile has been promoting these shared

objectives. These objectives have been included in the initiative in my country of incorporating paragraph 145 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) which refers to the need to stress that sports can foster peace and development among all of our peoples.

What has been done so far is important, but there is still much to be done. We favour establishing partnerships to mobilize resources and to build national capacity, particularly together with the private sector and civil society. In this connection, foundations, non-governmental organizations and sports federations play a central role.

Chile believes firmly that adopting this draft resolution could provide an excellent platform to fully implement the international development objectives as stated in the Millennium Declaration. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, Chile is pleased with the work completed during 2006 and believes that, in order to capitalize on these accomplishments, we need more specific initiatives that will allow us to integrate sports in plans and programmes for development and peace, both in the national and international spheres. We commit ourselves to continue to work actively together with others in achieving these noble objectives.

Mr. Zheglov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Sport, peace and development are closely interrelated concepts. The absence of war is an essential condition for competitive sport. Sport brings peoples closer together; the spirit of competition in sport does not mean combat between enemies, but working with partners in the general quest for development. In a globalized world that is facing new challenges and threats and in which dialogue between civilizations is essential, we believe that international cooperation in sports can play an important role in combating national and religious hatred and in strengthening the world community. As a powerful educational tool for developing mutual respect and tolerance, sport can be a factor in combating terrorist ideologies and intolerance. This was evident in the concrete outcomes of the International Year of Sports and Physical Education, which helped to address a number of social and economic issues. In the framework of the International Year of Sport, an international conference on sport and peace was held in Moscow; it gave fresh momentum to international efforts to prevent conflict, to reject enmity and aggression and to promote peace and harmony.

The President and the Government of the Russian Federation consider the dissemination in our country of the humanist values of sport to be of great importance. With that objective in mind, in January 2006 Russia adopted a federal programme for the development of physical education and sport. The programme aims to increase threefold the number of individuals participating in sport and significantly develop sports infrastructure. We attach particular importance to disseminating the high ideals of sport and the Olympic movement among children and young people. The number of important international sporting events being held in Russia is increasing. In 2006, our country hosted the world championships in track and field and women's soccer and European championships in wrestling and shooting, as well as the world and European championships in water polo, judo and freestyle. We are now focusing on our bid to host the 2014 Winter Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games in Sochi. We believe that holding the Olympics in our country will promote the development of the Olympic movement.

Russia particularly welcomes the activities of the United Nations in strengthening international cooperation in the area of competitive sports and in reaffirming the ideals of sport. We welcome the joint initiatives of the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee aimed at promoting the development of sport and physical education, developing education and health programmes, protecting the environment, combating hunger and promoting the advancement of women. Supporting sports, especially at the policy level, can help countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on sport for development and peace (A/61/373). Russia is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.12, introduced by Tunisia and entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace". We appeal for support for that constructive document.

We thank Mr. Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, for the active role that he has played. We are ready to continue our fruitful collaboration with the Special Adviser and fully support the continued operation of the New York Office for Sport for Development and Peace, headed by Mr. Djibril Diallo.

Sport is a universal language of communication. As participants in sporting events include people from

various countries, cultures and faiths, it would appear that "sports diplomacy" has great potential and can become an effective medium for promoting a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. As Pierre de Courbetin said, sport is a true ambassador for peace, a bridge to establish friendship and mutual understanding among peoples. We must make full use of that potential.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): It is widely acknowledged that sport can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. Sport and physical education can present opportunities for solidarity and cooperation in order to promote tolerance, a culture of peace, social and gender equality, adequate resources for the special needs of persons with disabilities, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 generated considerable attention in terms of the relevance of sports for peace and development. The momentum created as a result of the International Year provides a good basis for important follow-up. A key aspect in this regard will be the strengthening of the clear linkage between the opportunity to participate in sport and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the broader goals of sustainable development and peace.

Sports-based initiatives should be among the efforts to achieve the MDGs. The integration and mainstreaming of sport for development and peace in development programmes and policies are key in this regard. Norway supports the strategy that "sport for all" should be the basis for the systematic use of sport for development and peace. The most effective way to promote sport for all is through schools. Sport must be integrated into education plans in schools at all levels.

The United Nations has a clear role in implementing the agenda of sports for development and peace. The United Nations should promote the implementation of partnerships, initiatives and development projects. Partnerships have proved to be a useful approach in advancing and coordinating sport for development and peace. Partnerships can also lay the groundwork for the cost-effective integration of sports for development and peace into national development policies and programmes.

Sport programmes should be initiated to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Concerted efforts should be made to move positions

forward on women and sport. The follow-up process should be more systematic and effective in order to support a gender perspective. Intensified efforts in the area of sports should also be used to promote greater awareness and action to foster peace. In this regard, the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, is important.

Norway supports the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/373). The aim of the Action Plan is to realize the full potential of sport as a powerful, cost-effective way of supporting Member States in achieving the MDGs by 2015 and in attaining the broader goals of sustainable development and lasting peace. The intention is to expand and strengthen partnerships and sport for development and peace programmes and projects, as well as advocacy and communications activities.

In this respect I would like to emphasize the important work done by civil society. In particular, Norway has been proud to support Right To Play, an international humanitarian non-governmental organization headed by the Norwegian four-time Olympic gold medallist Johann Olav Koss, with programmes in close to 30 countries. We are equally impressed by the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya and its work for children and youth in slum areas.

Norway would also like to praise the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, for his dedication to these issues. He has indeed played a key role in promoting this important agenda.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): Let me start by thanking my colleague and friend, Ambassador Hachani of Tunisia, for his initiative to introduce this important draft resolution once again this year.

Let there be no doubt as to the strong support of the Government of Italy for this new area of activities of the United Nations — support that was recently renewed by our Minister for Sport and Youth in her statement at the opening of the youth leadership summit that took place in this very Hall last Sunday, organized by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

Italy is actively involved in the work of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace.

I would like here to commend the efforts of the Office of Sport for Development and Peace, under the passionate and committed leadership of the Special Adviser, Mr. Ogi, and of Mr. Djibril Diallo, who deserve our warmest and most sincere thanks. Let me recall here that the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Eliasson, used to say that without passion, nothing happens in life, and without compassion, the wrong things happen. Well, I must say that Djibril Diallo, the Director of the new United Nations Office, truly shows that passion and that compassion.

Italy is happy to be a sponsor of this draft resolution, as it was last year. I do not want to repeat here what I said last year on this subject, which has also been stated very eloquently by other colleagues who spoke earlier this evening. We all know and acknowledge to what extent sport is a new and important tool for achieving the goals of the United Nations in the field of peace, development, education and health.

We have achieved a broad consensus on the basis of our strategy in this field; what we need now is action.

What I wish to stress here today is the fact that the responsibility for implementing this draft resolution, once adopted, now lies with Member States and the United Nations system. The draft makes specific requests for action by all Member States. We are all called by the resolution to put in place concrete operational initiatives in order to translate into reality the United Nations strategy in this field.

We are called to mainstream sport for development in our development programmes in order to apply the benefits of this strategy directly in, for example, least developed countries. We are in particular called to assist the least developed countries in their capacity-building efforts in sports programmes.

We are called also to promote new funding and arrangements in taking forward this strategy, and, finally, we are called to mobilize our civil society through the engagement of sport organizations, athletes and the private sector.

We are the United Nations. What is at stake is our credibility — the credibility of the General Assembly and of its revitalized role. When we all meet again in this Hall next year to review the situation, we will have

to produce evidence of concrete progress and action in this field. We will have to show that we have delivered and that we are delivering because we have a vision and the political will to go on implementing it.

Mr. Psiachas (Greece): Greece proudly co-sponsored the draft resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. In addition, Greece continues to promote the idea of the Olympic Truce, a noble cause dating back to our antiquity.

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the unique position of sport to spread the message of peace and foster development. Greece, which last hosted the Olympic Games in their birthplace and, incidentally, currently holds the titles of European champion in both football and basketball, fully supports the Secretary-General's Action Plan and looks forward to developing synergies among Governments, sport-related organizations, and the private sector.

Greece would like in that regard to convey its sincere thanks and congratulations to the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as to the Office of Sport for Development and Peace, for their bold initiatives in this area.

Mr. Lutterotti (Austria): Sport is indeed — as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said — a universal language and a powerful tool that brings people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status.

Austria strongly believes in the power of sport to contribute to development and peace. Sport is an effective and low-cost means of promoting the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, to which Austria is fully committed. We note with satisfaction that the International Year for Sport and Physical Education in 2005 created an important momentum worldwide. That momentum was reinforced by the recent youth leadership summit held in New York. Now it is up to us to build upon this momentum. In this perspective, we welcome the report of the

Secretary-General and his Action Plan. Sports as a means for peace and development must remain high on our agenda.

We wish to commend the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, for his tireless, energetic and action-oriented efforts. We hope that he will continue to serve in this capacity in the future with the support of the United Nations system. Our special thanks also go to the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, under the able leadership of Mr. Djibril Diallo.

Austria welcomes draft resolution A/61/L.12 on "Sports as a means to promote education, health, development and peace". We thank Tunisia for its efforts in drafting and negotiating the draft resolution. My delegation is pleased to be a co-sponsor.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace".

There are four additional sponsors: Cameroon, Mauritius, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.12?

Draft resolution A/61/L.12 was adopted (resolution 61/10).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 49?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform Member States that, at the request of the sponsor, consideration of agenda item 45, entitled "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order", has been postponed to a later date.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-first session

49th plenary meeting

Tuesday, 7 November 2006, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 103 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(a) Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

The President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 103 on the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2006.

As members will recall, when the 44th plenary meeting was adjourned on Tuesday morning, 31 October 2006, there still remained one seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States to be filled.

Before proceeding further, I would like to inform members that I have received a letter dated 3 November 2006 from the Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States informing the Assembly that, after the withdrawal of Guatemala and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela as candidates to the Security Council for the period 2007-2008, the Group has endorsed the candidature of Panama.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the next round of balloting by secret ballot.

This forty-eighth round of balloting, will, in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure, also be the twenty-third unrestricted ballot.

For this forty-eighth round of balloting, may I remind the Assembly that any Member State from among the Latin American and Caribbean States may be a candidate except those outgoing members and those already members of the Security Council, namely Argentina and Peru.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all the ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "B" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "B" for the Latin American and Caribbean States the name of the one State for which they wish to vote.

Ballot papers marked "B" will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State as well as if they contain the name of a Member State which does not belong to that region.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Sepúlveda (Chile), Ms. Cerere (Kenya), Mr. Riedzal (Malaysia), Ms. Klaus (Poland) and Mr. Flueck (Switzerland) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.40 a.m.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

06-60535 (E)



The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group B — Latin American and Caribbean States

Number of ballot papers:	190
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	189
Abstentions:	9
Required two-thirds majority:	120
Number of votes obtained:	
Panama	164
Venezuela	11
Guatemala	4
Barbados	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes, Panama is elected a member of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 2007.

The following five States have thus been elected members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 2007: Belgium, Indonesia, Italy, Panama and South Africa.

The President: I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Security Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

I am delighted that the General Assembly has just elected Panama, starting from 1 January 2007, as the second non-permanent member of the Security Council from among the Latin American and Caribbean Group of States.

On this occasion, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to Panama on its election and wish it every success in the discharge of this important mandate.

Allow me also to commend the Latin American and Caribbean Group of States for the spirit of compromise and solidarity they have shown throughout this process.

In this context, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to both Guatemala and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for their joint decision to work closely with other members of the Group in order to reach consensus on a compromise candidate. I also wish to thank both countries for their courteous manner and the exemplary cooperation extended to my office and to me personally.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Skinner-Klee (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, thank you for allowing me to take the floor on this occasion.

My delegation wishes to use this opportunity to reiterate its gratitude to your Government in particular and to each of the 116 countries that have supported us at this time in our aspiration to fill the non-permanent member vacancy traditionally filled by a member of the Latin American and Caribbean Group in the Security Council during the 2007-2008 biennium. Our special recognition goes to our Mesoamerican partners, the countries of Central America, Colombia and Mexico.

We also wish to thank all the members of the General Assembly for their patience, as well as for the respect shown through this electoral process that concludes today.

To the Government and people of Panama, we extend our heartfelt congratulations for their selection by the Latin American and Caribbean Group, on the initiative of Guatemala and Venezuela, to be proposed to the General Assembly as the consensus candidate to represent our region in the Security Council during the 2007-2008 biennium. We feel well-represented by Panama, a brotherly country and member of the Central American Integration System.

Although we regret the polarization of the campaign by reasons that had nothing to do with our own conduct, we are proud of the fact that Guatemala could carry out a systematic and professional campaign, well planned, and, above all, with dignity, respect and collegiality, that was worthy of the endorsement of as many as 116 of the countries Members of this Organization.

At all times, Guatemala has defended the principles and purposes enshrined in the United Nations Charter, especially with regard to the friendly relations among States, equitable geographical rotation and participation of small States in the various United Nations bodies.

Guatemala has waited for the opportunity to participate in the Security Council for more than 60 years. We have more than sufficient merit to serve on that body, and this is why my Government has duly presented to our regional Group its candidacy for the vacancy that will come up for the 2012-2013 biennium. It is our hope that on that occasion the countries of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States will give us their support.

Mr. Arias Cárdenas (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías, and on behalf of our people, we would like to thank all United Nations representatives. We would like to thank you, Madam President, and the General Assembly for its support and understanding.

We made a proposal — a very frank proposal of our own — to provide the Security Council with a balanced and independent voice. The election was quite unique; it was more than a campaign between two brotherly countries within one region where there was no consensus. Various statements were made in this very Hall. Afterwards, the Ambassador of the United States claimed that this had been a triumph for his country, for the United States, and that it had achieved its objective, namely to ensure that a developing country such as ours did not achieve a seat on the Security Council.

We could deny this or draw other conclusions from this, but we would prefer not to do so. We would prefer to say that we would not like to speak of defeat or the defeated. But there must be lessons learned from these 46 rounds of balloting in the General Assembly. For the big countries, it should be clear that they cannot impose their will and that the Assembly will not accept imposition, because it exercises its freedom in democracy. We should also remember that some embraces end up by killing you, like a bear hug; and everyone should remember the strength and power of the General Assembly.

Finally, we must learn the strength of dialogue. In looking at the proposal that the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) has put forward to the General Assembly — the proposal of Panama — which is a bridge between Central America and South America — a country that was part of the great liberator Simon Bolívar's big homeland, Greater Colombia, we hope that country will move forward, be independent, impartial and balanced within the Security Council. Of course, as a nation with a vision, we will be prepared to support them in every way possible.

The President: That concludes our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 103.

Agenda item 103 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council

The President: The General Assembly will resume its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 103 on the election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2006.

Before proceeding further, I would like to remind members that, as was announced at the 46th plenary meeting, on Thursday, 2 November 2006, we shall first hold elections to fill the one remaining seat from among the Eastern European States. Thereafter, we shall proceed to a by-election to elect a member of the Council from among the Western European and other States.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the elections to fill the one remaining seat from among the Eastern European States. In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall proceed now to the next round of balloting by secret ballot. This ninth round of balloting which, in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure, will also be the fifth restricted ballot. This ninth round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected in the previous ballot, namely Belarus and Bulgaria. This is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of the State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C" for the Eastern European States will be declared invalid if they contain the name of a State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, as well as if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lomba (Gabon), Ms. Farfán (El Salvador), Mr. Komar (Indonesia), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Bovi (San Marino) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting resumed at 11.20 a.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Group C — Eastern European States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	191
Abstentions:	1
Required two-thirds majority:	127
Number of votes obtained:	
Belarus	114
Bulgaria	76

Since no candidate obtained the required two-thirds majority in the previous ballot, there remains one seat to be filled from among the Eastern European States. We shall therefore proceed to the tenth round of balloting.

I give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria on a point of order.

Mr. Piperkov (Bulgaria): Upon instructions from my Government, I wish to make the following statement.

The Republic of Bulgaria submitted its candidature for membership of the United Nations Economic and Social Council guided by the will to contribute in good faith to effective partnership and cooperation among United Nations Member States in the economic and social field. My country gave ample proof of its commitment to the Economic and Social Council during its several previous terms on the Council.

At the time of the elections for new members of the Economic and Social Council held on 2 November 2006, there were clear indications of wide support among Member States for the Bulgarian candidature. However, although in the first round Bulgaria received 123 votes — five votes short of the required two-thirds majority — we have taken note of the fact that our bid

to serve on the Economic and Social Council for the period 2007-2009 did not receive the support of the required majority of Member States. Acting in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation, Bulgaria has therefore decided to withdraw its candidature and to postpone it to a later time.

My country remains committed to the goals of the Economic and Social Council and stands ready to contribute in every possible way to streamlining the work of that main United Nations body.

I would like to express our deep and sincere gratitude to all the countries that have given us their unwavering support throughout the election campaign.

The Acting President: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his cooperation.

Taking into account the statement just made by the representative of Bulgaria, we will proceed to the next restricted ballot, in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure. This round of balloting shall be restricted to the two States from among the Eastern European States that were not elected in the previous ballot, namely, Belarus and Bulgaria. This is in accordance with rule 94 of the rules of procedure.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been counted.

Ballot papers marked "C" will now be distributed. May I ask representatives to write on the ballot papers the name of the State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers marked "C" for the Eastern European States will be declared invalid if they contain the name of a State other than Belarus or Bulgaria, as well as if they contain the name of more than one State.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Lomba (Gabon), Ms. Farfán (El Salvador), Mr. Komar (Indonesia), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Bovi (San Marino) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group C — Eastern European States

Number of ballot papers:	191
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	190
Abstentions:	22
Required two-thirds majority:	112
Number of votes obtained:	
Belarus	156
Bulgaria	12

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, Belarus was elected a member of the Economic and Social Council for a three-year term beginning 1 January 2007.

The Acting President: Having obtained the required two-thirds majority of members present and voting, the following 18 States have thus been elected members of the Economic and Social Council for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2007: Algeria, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Canada, Cape Verde, El Salvador, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Malawi, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Romania, Somalia, the Sudan and the United States of America.

I congratulate those States which have been elected members of the Economic and Social Council.

As was announced earlier this morning, the Assembly will now proceed to a by-election to elect a member of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with rule 140 of the rules of procedure.

In that connection, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/61/557, containing a letter dated 2 November 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations. In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Australia announces that Australia would like to relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for its remaining term in favour of New Zealand.

As a result, a vacancy will occur and a new member must therefore be elected to fill the unexpired term of office of Australia, commencing 1 January 2007 and expiring on 31 December 2007.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2847 (XXVI) of 20 December 1971, and taking into account that the vacancy will occur from among the Western European and other

States, the new member should therefore be elected from that region.

I should like to inform the Assembly that the candidate which receives a two-thirds majority of members present and voting will be declared elected. In the case of a tie vote, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, there shall be no nominations, and we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

I should like to inform members that, as of 1 January 2007, the following States from the Group of Western European and other States will be represented on the Economic and Social Council: Austria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

The names of those 12 States should therefore not appear on the ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all the ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. Ballot papers will be declared invalid if they contain the name of more than one State as well as if they contain the name of a Member State which does not belong to that region.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Farfán (El Salvador), Mr. Lomba (Gabon), Mr. Komar (Indonesia), Ms. Aperans (Latvia) and Ms. Bovi (San Marino) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 12 noon and resumed at 12.15 p.m.

The Acting President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group E — Western European and other States

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	1
Number of valid ballots:	185
Abstentions:	8
Required two-thirds majority:	118
Number of votes obtained:	
New Zealand	176
San Marino	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, New Zealand was elected a member of the Economic and Social Council for a term of office beginning 1 January 2007 and ending on 31 December 2007.

The Acting President: I congratulate New Zealand, which has been elected a member of the Economic and Social Council, and I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 103.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.